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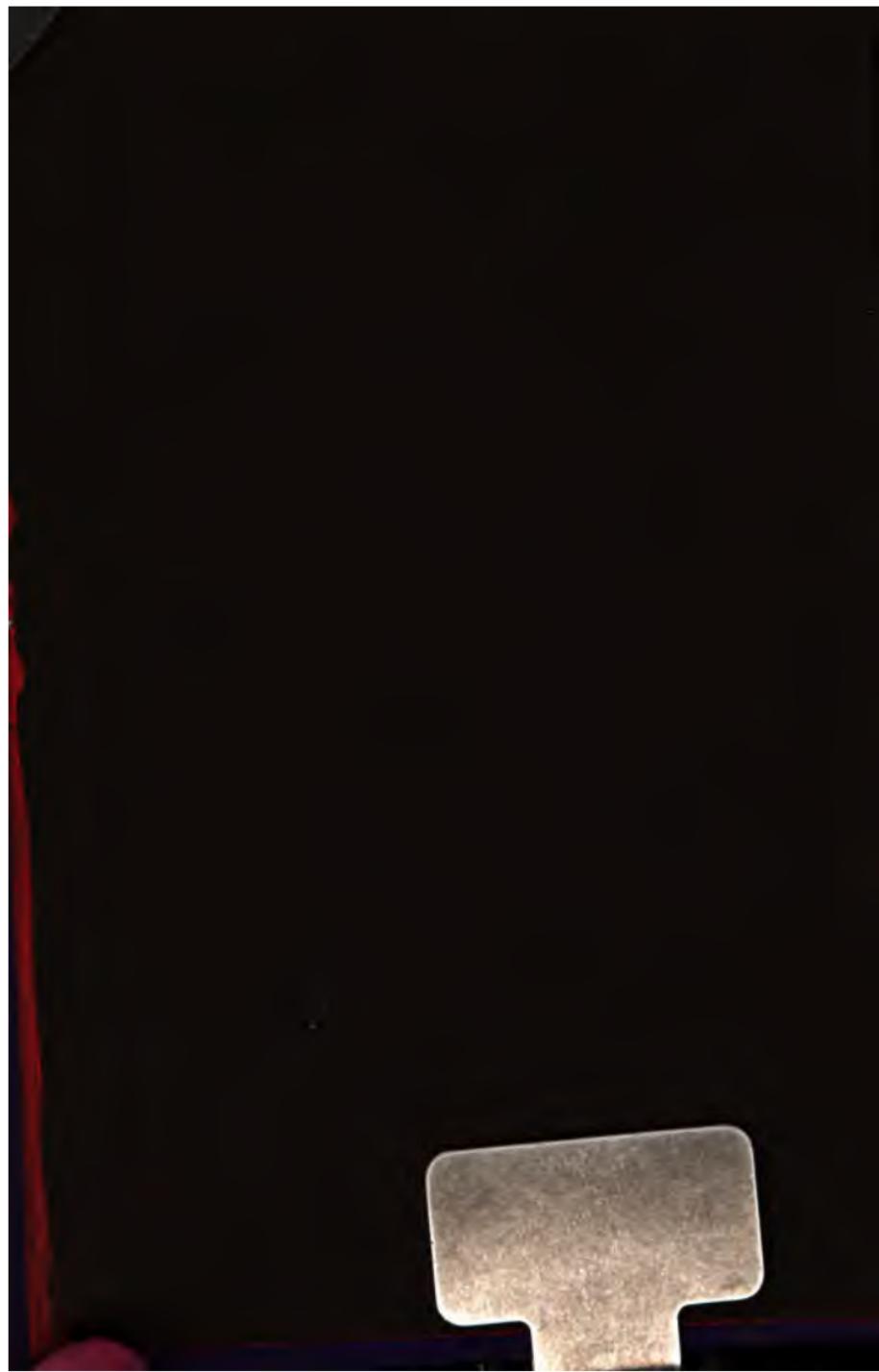
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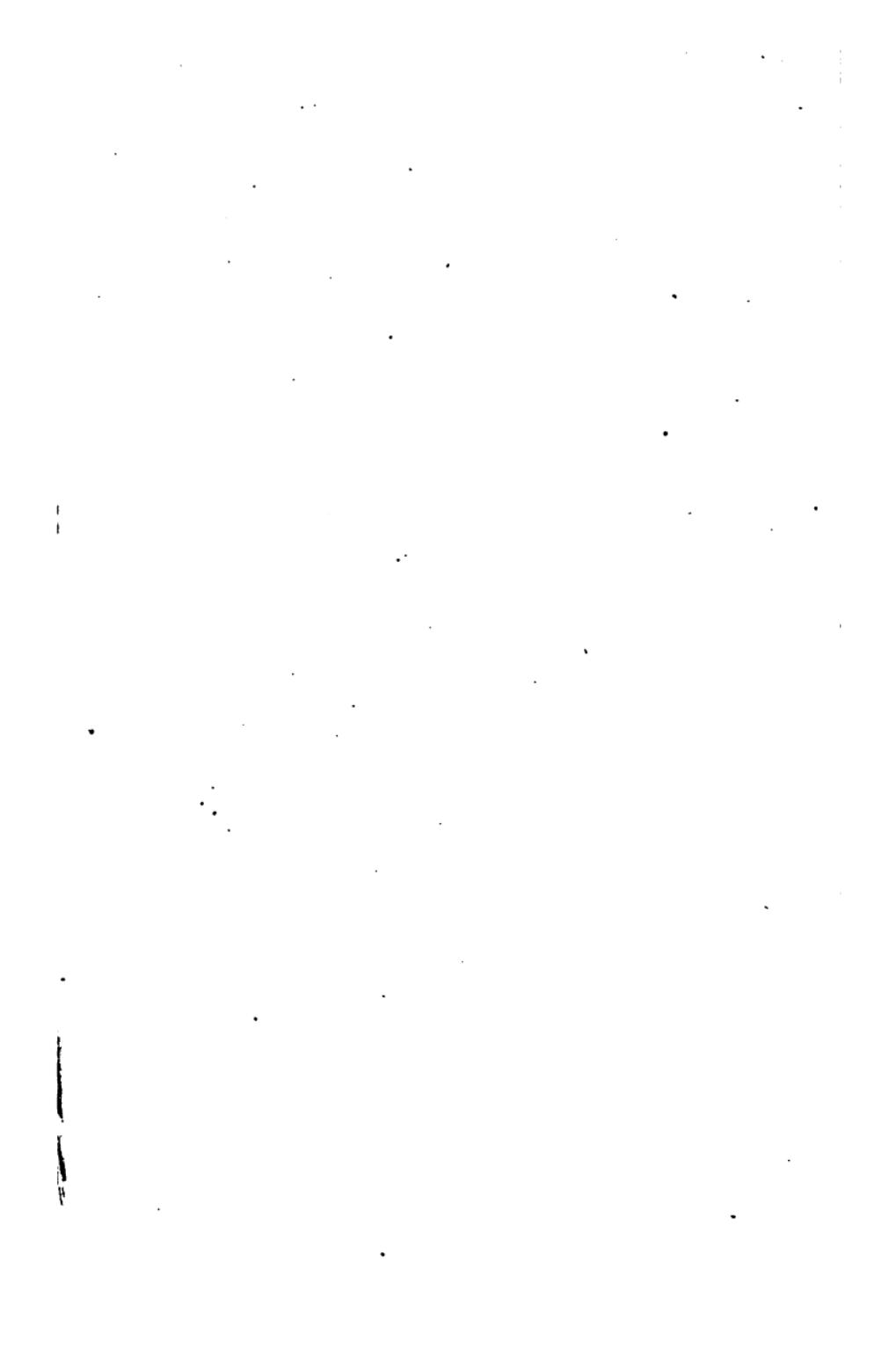
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# SHORT SERMONS

FOR  
THE YEAR.

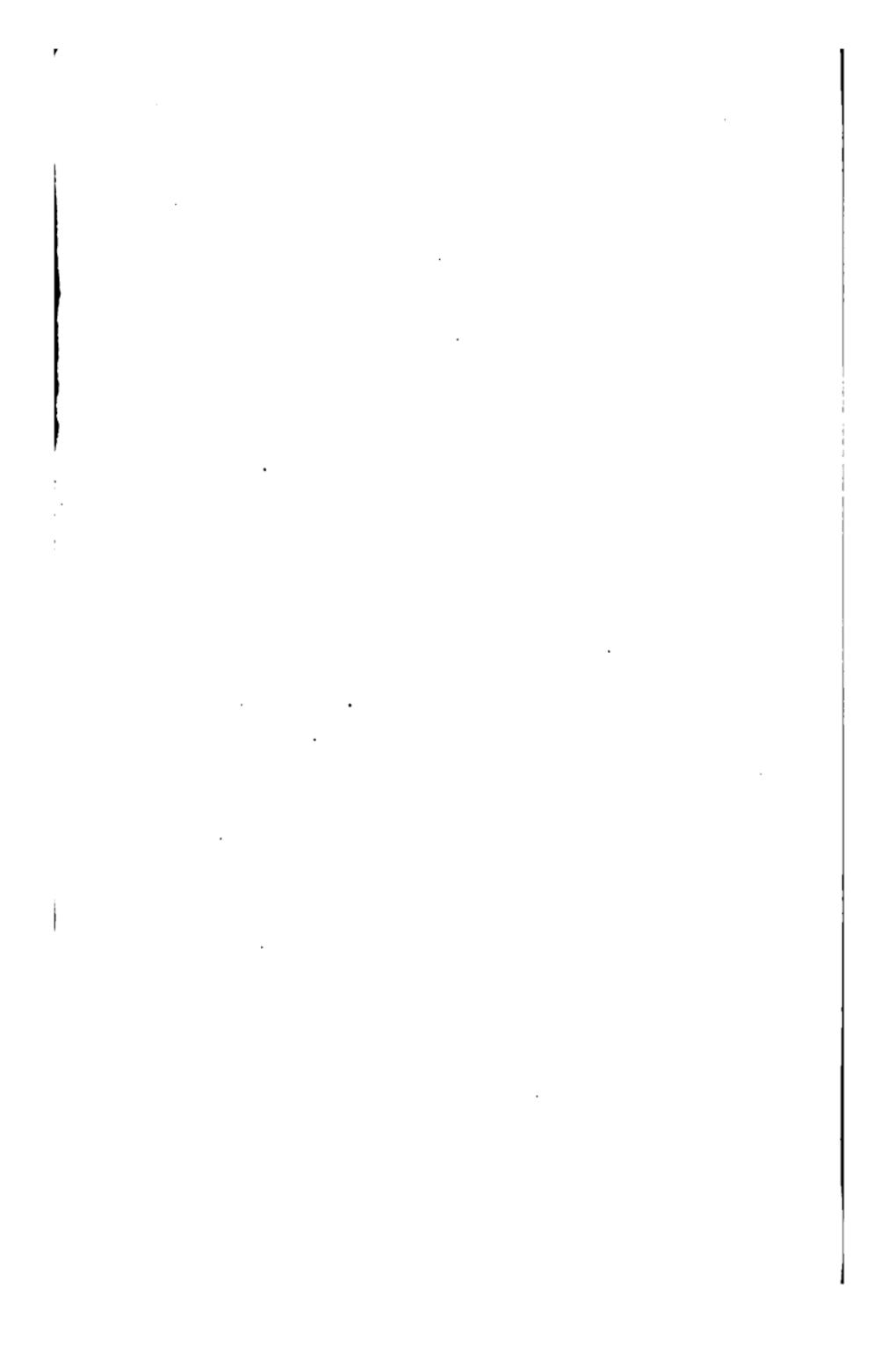
BY

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LONDON :  
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1873.



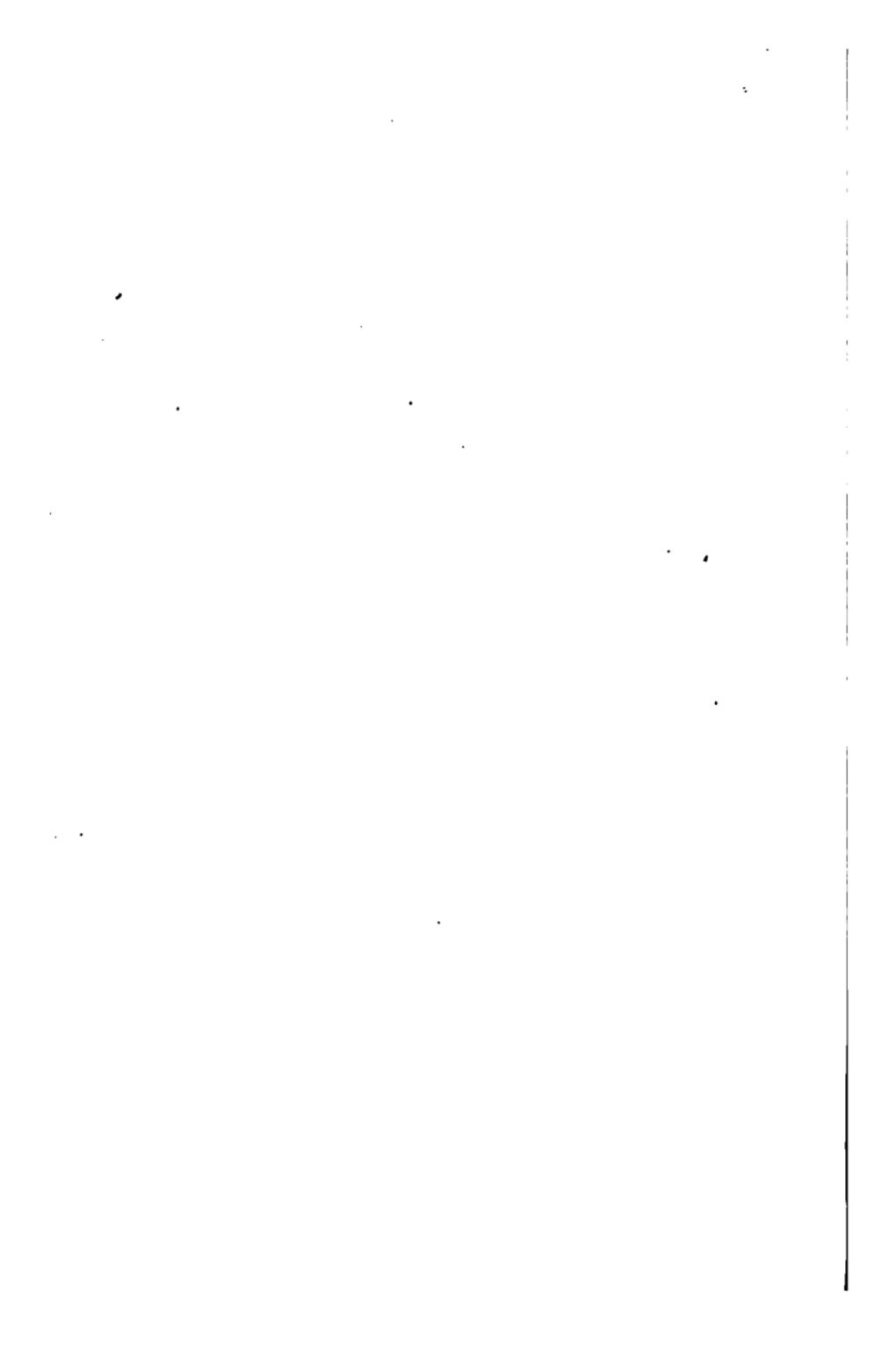
## *PREFACE.*

FOR many years it has been the custom at our Church to preach very short Sermons before the Mid-day Celebration, with a view to shortening the early part of the Service before the reception of the Holy Communion.

In order that these addresses should be of any practical value it has been necessary to confine each of them to one simple line of thought.

From time to time their publication has been strongly urged under the idea that they might form a useful volume for reading in the family, or elsewhere, and also be used in private by the sick, and those who in this busy age have not time for lengthened reading.

It is natural that there should be in several allusions to the Sacrament that was shortly to follow. It has not been thought expedient to omit these. Where they exist they are indicated by an asterisk in the Table of Contents.



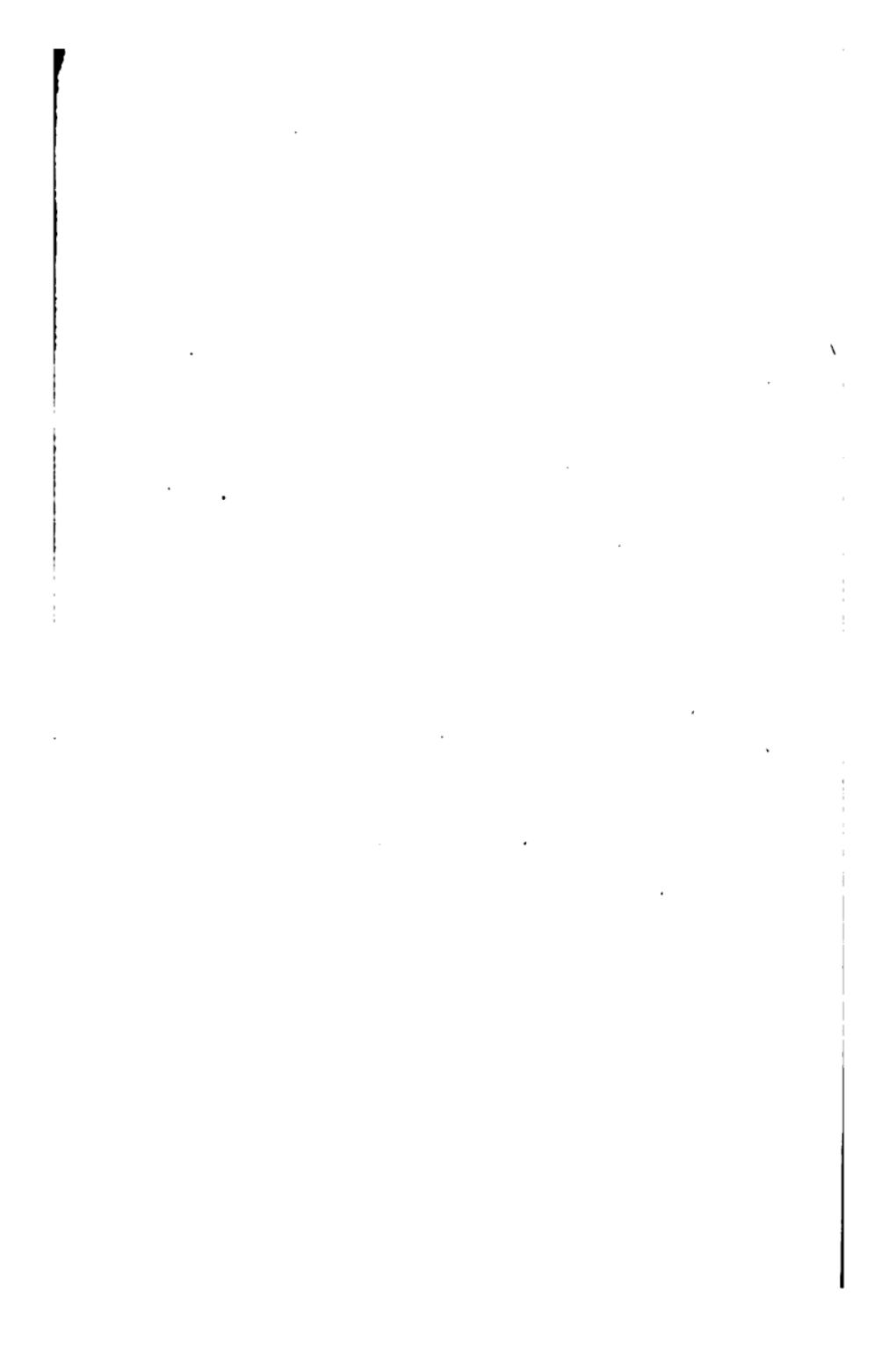
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## *THE ARMOUR OF LIGHT.*

(ADVENT.)

ROMANS XIII. 12.

*"Let us put on the armour of light."*

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ONCE more the Advent call sounds. Once more we hear the summons of the returning King. It bids us take heed and consider, for "the night is "far spent." The night of this world's sin and estrangement from God : the season when the Prince of darkness reigns : the time of ignorance and spiritual blindness : the time of sloth and slumber and inactivity : the time of danger and temptation. It is far spent. Each succeeding century is bringing on the dawn of day—many see the token of the coming morn in the aspect of the world political and in the world of thought. "The "night is far spent. The day is at hand." The day

*No. 1*

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which the coming of Christ will assuredly usher in. The day bright with the light of holiness which streams from the All-holy Saviour. The light which shall drive away all darkness, and deeds of darkness, and reveal to us those secrets which now we cannot know. That day is at hand. So near is it, so certain is the approaching dawn, that we are bidden to be up and doing. From the time when the Master Himself spake about the coming of the day, His people's duty in every age has been to look out for its arrival. It may be at any period. Nothing has been so clearly revealed as to happen first, that we can say that the day may not burst suddenly upon us now. It may come in our lifetime. Who shall say?

Therefore the exhortation to the Romans is one peculiarly applicable to us. "Let us put on "the armour of light." We are as soldiers in the enemy's country. Our home is light, but the scene of our warfare is in the land of darkness. And being in the land of darkness the temptation is to be as the children of darkness round us, dark in sin, dark in ignorance and doubt, and therefore dark in misery. The Advent call, however, bids us shake off these overpowering influences,—to "put off the works of darkness" as

we would our night-clothes, and to “put on the “armour of light.”

How would you wish to be found when the long expected day shall dawn ? How appear when that light which maketh all things manifest and discloseth all hidden secrets shall shine upon you and light you through and through. Would you not be ashamed if it came on you unawares, and notwithstanding all Advent warnings it found you with no preparation made ?

“The Armour of Light.” This speaks to us of watchfulness, which we as sentinels in the night time are to maintain ; watchfulness against temptation ; watchfulness for the coming of the day.

“The Armour of Light.” This speaks to us of the activity, the service, the warfare to which we as soldiers of the Cross are called.

And it tells us also that we are not to use unrighteous means in our warfare. Deceit is not to be met with deceit. Our weapons are drawn from the heavenly armoury, and on such alone can we expect the blessing of God to rest. The end does not sanctify the means. Deeds of violence, words of anger, are not included in this armoury.

Yea, the whole of this armour is summed up and described in the concluding verse of the chapter as “putting on the Lord Jesus Christ,” Who is the Light of the world, and in Whose light we all are to shine.

## *THE IMMOVEABLE KINGDOM.*

(ADVENT.)

HEB. XII. 28.

*"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."*

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WE are considering in our Sunday evening discourses the characteristics of the Future, as revealed to S. John, and I invite your attention to the connection between the Present and the Future. They are not such distinct Epochs, but that there is a regular sequence from the one to the other. The kingdom of the Present will naturally develope into the kingdom of the Future.

This is alluded to in the passage before us, and indeed in every passage where the present dispensation is described as the kingdom of Christ, or the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of Heaven. "We receiving the kingdom which cannot be "moved." Allusion is made to those things

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which had been moved or shaken, and to the moving or shaking which is yet to be. But the kingdom,—that will remain the same, whatever may be the convulsions of nature. All the changes (and we know that they will be greater than any that yet have been,) will not move the kingdom. It standeth firm. It is based on the oath of God. It is founded on the Everlasting Rock of Ages. It has begun now, and it will extend on into the other world. It will last beyond the Judgment for ever and ever. The same Kingdom with the same King, the same subjects, the same law, the same standard.

And therefore we may say, it will be a kingdom not of stagnation but of Eternal Progress. For Progress has marked everything that God has ever revealed to us. There is Progress in Creation, progress in Redemption, progress in Sanctification, progress in Revelation. And therefore we have every reason to believe that there will be progress in the future, not from imperfection to perfection, but in perfection itself, a constant rising from one state of bliss to another, ever onwards from glory to glory towards Him who is infinitely beyond and above us all.

And as we dwell upon these thoughts, and

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thoughts such as these, we cannot but ask the question whether they are the things most present to our mind, as our highest and most cherished notions of delight.

If not, where shall I be found when that day comes suddenly upon us all? If there were no worse lot for the unbeliever than to be present and to take part in that for which he has no taste or affinity, to witness the surpassing joy of others, in that which is to him only a weariness and constraint, what would my portion be? The things of God, what are they to you? Let conscience bear its faithful witness, let your private chamber tell its tale, let your Bible read or unread give its testimony. Is there joy to you in personal ministrations to Jesus Christ and His poor? Does His Presence now give you happiness, or the reverse? Are you found seeking it, and its appointed pledges? Is the Sabbath day your happiest in the foretaste of an endless sabbath?

Oh see to it, that when you hear the voice of the Archangel and the Trump of God, it may be the summons, the well known, the long expected summons of your Saviour King, to enter into that kingdom well defined in the Promises of the

Eternal. Flee to Christ now and put Him to the proof. Flee to Christ now and accept His offered pardon. Flee to Christ now, and rest with assurance on the Rock of Ages, that when the crash of Nature comes and all is being dissolved with heat and noise, you may look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

## *PREPARING FOR THE LORD.*

(ADVENT.)

S. LUKE I. 17.

*"To make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

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THIS is the angelic declaration of what was to be the end of the Baptist's life. As the forerunner of Christ he was to prepare for the first Advent. And this preparation was to consist in what is here called "turning the hearts of the fathers to "the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom "of the just," *i.e.*, in reviving the ancient faith and fear of God, and so making ready a people prepared for the Lord ; prepared to welcome Him when He came.

I shall not pause to point out how S. John the Baptist accomplished this, for my object is to insist on a similar preparation for the second

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coming. For it is evident that if a preparation was needed for the first Coming, when the message of the Kingdom was to be first proclaimed—much more is that preparation needed when the Gospel dispensation closes, and, the number of the elect being complete, Christ will return to reign. Think of life in general. Think of your own life in particular ; and you will see abundant need for this preparation. Are we ready as a Church, are we ready as individuals to welcome back the returning Lord? We may boldly say that the object before us all now should be, as it was thus early declared to be the object of the Baptist's mission, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

For we must remember that as we are found at that coming so will be the judgment pronounced upon us. A man at any one period of his life is the result of all the influences, and all the experiences of his past. He is the epitome of all that has happeued to him. He is the sum of all his former history. Each event has left its mark upon him. Each former passage has had its effect in forming him. And at any one given time he is in his own person the result of all he has been through before.

Therefore we are rightly judged when we are found, as we then shall be. For what we then are is the history of our whole lives compressed and summed up together in one. And consequently the process of a Christian man's life should be preparing for that day, that he may be "prepared for the Lord."

Think then of the Son of Man, our Exalted Head, the Great King of His people, coming at the last to take the kingdom. Think of Him thus coming as our own long looked for Redeemer, and say whether as His loyal subjects, it is not our duty and high privilege to be making ready for it. Making ourselves ready, making the Church ready, making the world ready to receive Him, as He should be received when the day of the Lord shall come. This view of life is a very high one. We are told that His Messenger before the first Coming was as great as any that have been born of women. There can be no higher calling. There can be no work on which hereafter we can look back with equal satisfaction, as that of having laboured to make ready for the triumphant return of Jesus the Church's King.

You may make this your object in the whole spiritual life. In every effort to be good you may

place this end before you. I am trying to make ready. I am preparing for the coming. I know not when it will be. But whenever it comes, oh that I may be prepared.

In all active work for others this should be your object, that you may help to make them ready, ready to receive the returning Christ.

## *CHRISTMAS JOY.*

S. LUKE II. 20.

*"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen."*

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WE celebrate great things to day on our happy Christmas Festival. Great things of happy import which make us glad if we rightly think of them. All things round us are calls to gladness. The family gatherings, the social pleasures, the outflow of benevolence, the annual tokens of domestic love, the cheerful wayside greetings, are so many calls to general enjoyment and peace and content. To some however these things are but a mockery, and tell of happiness departed and joys no longer theirs. But our Church's call is different,—it is a call to all, whether those in prosperity or those in adversity—wherever you may be as to outward circumstances, it matters

not so far as our higher invitation is concerned, to be glad in God for the birth of His dear Son.

And yet the general gladness of which we speak does undoubtedly in some instances come in between the soul and this high Christian joy. Men rest in the earthly, in which there is a certain enjoyment, and forget the heavenly, in which alone there is depth and permanence.

And therefore it may be well for us to examine our hearts and see whether the joyousness of our spirits is now arising solely from the outer associations, or whether it takes its rise from the perennial fountains of living joy.

What was it made those shepherds rejoice ? It was the tidings that the Angel gave, confirmed by the fulfilment of the sign. It was the sure certainty that unto them was born that day in the city of David a Saviour which is Christ the Lord.

How much does such an announcement include. And yet it is an announcement made this morning to every individual. You are sinners and need a Saviour. You need a Saviour from your sins—a Saviour from the adverse testimony of conscience—a Saviour from Satan—a Saviour from death, and a Saviour from Hell.

You need One of far more than human power and excellence. One Who knowing all the peculiarities of your trials and temptations in their several variations, can at the same time by His oneness with the Father send you super-human help. He, who is at once the Son of Man and the Son of God, did as on this day appear on your behalf. He was born, helpless it is true, and needing all human care and tending for His support.

But His birth was the pledge of His accomplishing salvation, and being to you all that you require and want. Here is the true secret of the joy of Christmas. Oh do you feel it in all your separate isolation? Let this Christmas joy come to you now. Open your hearts to receive it. The new-born Infant whose birth we celebrate to day speaks to you in the lowness of all the outward surroundings of His birth. See to what a depth God has descended—see to what He submitted on your behalf. He speaks to you of the Design of the Eternal, of the true Promises of God, and of that Kingdom which shall last for ever and ever.

And therefore, whether in your private history this Christmas has happy or melancholy outward

associations, may God grant you to have that inward rejoicing on account of His good will.

We invite you then to celebrate His Birth in the Great Eucharist or thanksgiving service of the Church. To cast aside for a while all the outer surroundings, and in deep and solemn communion to feed on Him who was born on this day for your salvation.

## *READINESS.*

(*NEW YEAR.*)

**EPH. VI. 15.**

*"And your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace."*

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I ADOPT the meaning of these words given by S. Chrysostom, and followed by a large majority of interpreters. The meaning that we should be prepared as ready messengers to proclaim the Gospel of peace. And one ground of my adoption of this interpretation is a reason that has been given on the other side. It has been argued that the Apostle is here speaking to the whole Church, and not merely to the Minister of the Church; and that consequently he could not speak to the whole of that which is the duty only of a part.

The Apostle is speaking to the whole Church  
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it is true. But is he speaking only of the duty of one part of it? Is not the duty of Evangelising the duty of the whole? Are we not exhorted —“As every man hath received the gift, even so “minister the same one to another, as good stewards “of the manifold grace of God.” The trust has been committed to the whole Body of Believers, and the whole Body of Believers is concerned in its discharge. It is no private concern of the clergy.. It is the privilege as well as the duty of the laity too to be ready messengers to proclaim the Gospel of peace. And therefore when the Apostle would describe the Christian armoury, he does not confine himself to the various weapons for private defence or for private attack, but he mentions this which has reference to the soldier fighting in company with others and carrying on the war of the whole army of the Church of Christ. “Your feet shod with the preparation “of the Gospel of peace.”

And I know not that on the First Sunday of a New Year we could take a more appropriate subject than this command to be always promptly ready to seize opportunities for doing God's work.

In this coming year there will doubtless be,

should our lives be spared, many openings for doing good. We are to be ready to seize the opportunities before the time for doing so has passed away.

Ready—but how are we to make ourselves ready, or to use the metaphor in the text, how are we to have our feet shod? The expression implies that we are to be expecting to be called out on active service. That we are not to be content to be merely contemplative Christians. That we are not to place it before us as an end in life (as it is the manner of some) to see how little responsibility we can incur, how small the work to which we shall stand committed. On the contrary, we are to be on the watch-tower to see what message is coming,—what call for action is being sent.

There may be some call now on its way that you are little expecting. An unwelcome call it may be. You may be inclined at first to think it can be no personal call for you. And yet if you are in readiness and willing to do anything that is clearly laid upon you as your own proper calling—on the look out to read in the circumstances of your life, the peculiarities of your position and attainments, what God would have

you do, you will be called probably to very much that now seems most unlikely.

Nay more, I will be bold to say, that if these opportunities are watched for and embraced, however irksome and troublesome they may seem at first, yet a rich blessing will follow you as you do the work God gives you to do.

And also in the doing it you will be cheered with the knowledge that you are only one in connection with many others, that as you do your own work well you are strengthening the hands of others, many of whom you know not, and will never know.

You may still further be encouraged by the high honour which it is for any one to be engaged in this extension of the Kingdom, and so preparing for the grand consummation which every one of us—in some state or other—is destined to witness.

Prepare yourselves then, that you may be ready, having your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.

## *EPIPHANY.*

S. MATT. II. 11.

*“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His Mother, and fell down and worshipped Him; and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts—gold and frankincense and myrrh.”*

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THUS early in our Lord's life was the Catholicity of His future kingdom proclaimed. There had been prophecies pointing to it beforehand ; but as yet they were very dimly understood. There was so much Divine authority for the isolation of Israel among the nations. There had been their education previous to their entrance into Canaan, all designedly intended to mark them off as a people that should dwell alone. There were all the physical conditions of Palestine which to a great extent shut them out from intercourse with neighbouring states. There were divinely ordered institutions and national customs which made them different from all other dwellers upon earth. They had the sacred seed. To them and

to them alone were the sacred writings committed. To them and to them alone was revealed the Shechinah or manifestation of Deity. These and other things which might be mentioned would naturally lead them to dwell upon the limitations of the Covenant. They would think —they did think that thus it was always to continue, that they were to remain the exclusive favorites of heaven, and that only by being incorporated with them was the sure favor of Jehovah to be secured.

It required then no common teaching, no ordinary events, to awaken them to a sense of the comprehensive character of the kingdom of the Messiah. One precept had to follow another, one barrier after another had to be swept away before they could understand that in deed and in truth God had made both Jew and Gentile one in CHRIST.

The season of Epiphany is the time when we are called especially to commemorate this truth, this Manifestation of CHRIST to the Gentiles.

The Angel at first proclaims the truth in general terms, “good will to men”, stating that this Newly-born was a message of glad tidings to “all people.” Their declaration was to Jews, to

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the Bethlehem shepherds, who at their command were admitted as the first spectators of the Infant King ; the first of the witnesses with the exception of Mary and Joseph who had any intimation of the marvellous importance of that deeply significant birth. Soon however they were followed by others who had received their instructions about the same time, but who from their longer journey did not arrive so soon. Gentiles were they ; separated from the seed of Abraham. Among their tribes probably there was no other divine tradition than that which pointed mysteriously to the Star of Jacob. They were no proselytes of the gate who had been led to ally themselves with Israel. They were strangers, aliens, with no affinity, with no approach to a claim upon the God of the old exclusive covenant.

They came however, and came under the special direction, the special guidance, the special inspiration of the Most High. None could refuse them admittance. None could deny them audience, seeing that the Star in the heavens was the voucher of their divine call. They came to Jerusalem ; ancient prophecy was consulted for their guidance. The phenomenon in the vault of heaven again directed them, and at length they

found where the young Child was. They enter, none forbidding. They kneel in humble adoration. They present their costly gifts, gifts very shortly to be sorely needed for the personal necessities of the royal Infant.

These men were in a certain sense representative men ; wise men they are called, Magi : kings according to early tradition. Men it may be selected by their fellows to go on this important embassy, and so adding a still deeper significance to this wondrous journey.

All, therefore, that could have been done to bring out the truth of the catholic mission of the Infant Jesus, was done. And we, as year by year we read this story have this glorious dogma brought out fresh and clear. It is one which from our natural exclusiveness we need to learn again and again : that we shut not ourselves out, that we shut not others out from that Gospel which is proclaimed to all. Let us endeavour to take wide and comprehensive views of God's great purposes, let us rise into the higher regions of His wide embracing love, and take home in the full certainty of revelation the universality of the Gospel offer to all ranks and conditions of human kind.

## **THE FIRST MIRACLE.**

**(SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.)**

**S. JOHN II. 11.**

*"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory, and His disciples believed on Him."*

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WE are all familiar with the fact of this miracle. The change of the water into wine, revealed our Lord as possessing the power of the Creator. It prefigures the work of the Re-creation in the hearts of those who form His kingdom. Simple elements pass silently beneath the power of His blessing. His servants bear forth. Water becomes generous wine.

And it is in this Almighty Blessing that He manifests forth His own glory : an expression which implies (as has been well observed) His Divinity. It is His own glory. With any other created being it would have been the glory of

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another. But here it is His own essential Divinity which shines through the earthly covering of His Humanity.

He manifested it forth, before His friends and before His disciples : but it was only His disciples of whom it is here recorded that they *believed on Him*.

In the mystery of our present life it is so still. The glories of the Lord only impress those who have given themselves to Him. He manifests Himself in the present day. Every sinner converted, every character changed for the better, every position won for the Church of Christ, private providences, public deliverances and judgments, all set forth that glory. But who cares ; who is any the better for it ; who is influenced by it ? Not the world in general, even though they acknowledge what has taken place. They attribute it to various causes, the working of natural laws, human influence, a private interest. But it is the Lord's people only who learn by His manifestations to have a firmer faith in Him than they had before.

And indeed He manifests Himself to them in a way He does not to the world at large. He manifests Himself to their inner consciousness,

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assures them of His presence and convinces them of His love. This is what we now seek. And it is with this particular object in view that you are now invited to that Feast in which He makes Himself known (to His faithful people) in the breaking of bread. Here He convinces us of His Love, that Love which made Him once and for all offer the great sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Here He approaches us one by one and tells of that special love which He has for each; how the sacrifice has effect not only on the mass but on the individual; how the broken bread and the poured out wine is for the assurance of His children, as they approach one by one; the whole sacrifice for each in its prevailing efficacy and its Divine completeness.

I invite you to this Saviour who is ever raising the bounties of nature into the channels of His grace—with whom the worldly rule is reversed—for the world ever gives us first its best and then its worst—whereas the Saviour is ever increasing the value of His gifts, and also increasing our capacity for receiving them. Come now and pray for help that you may find Him sensibly present to your soul; that the Sacrament may be a reality to you; a sealing of the promises of God; a

strengthening and refreshing to your weary spirit.

Thus and in this limited sense may the Lord now manifest forth His glory, and may His disciples believe on Him to their good and to His glory. Then thus strengthened and refreshed may they go forth to manifest that glory to the world, to be living witnesses to the Power of the Everlasting Son, to reflect on others the Light that has shone on them, to the praise of Almighty God.

## **THE CLAIMS OF THE CREATOR.**

### **PSALM XXIV. 1.**

*"The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein."*

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THIS is the true conclusion that follows on the first Lesson of this morning. God has made the world: the world belongs to Him. All natural religion points to the creation, and all revealed religion confirms the same. In the beginning—it matters comparatively nothing to us when the beginning was, whether six thousand or six million years ago—in the far distant past God created the heavens and the earth ; vegetable, animal, human life were called into existence by the exertion of His will and power. And being so called they all were His property, and He was Lord over all.

That relationship has never been abandoned. He is still the Creator. All things now existing, owe their existence to Him. Without Him none

would have their being. The life of every plant, of every beast and insect, of every human being has its origin from God.

This makes us all His. The fact that we all sinned in Adam does not invalidate the truth of our Creation, and therefore it in no way weakens the claim of God to be Lord over us all. We are, we remain His. "The earth is the Lord's "and the fulness thereof, the world and they that "dwell therein."

The present existence of creation points the enquiring mind to the Creator. All the marks of design direct us to an All wise and All mighty Designer. He that attentively observes events as they pass, he that studies the course of history that has been, learns that there is a Divinity ruling over all and directing and controlling the affairs of men.

So that all things around teach you that you belong to God, that He has the right to all you have and all you are, and all you do. The right based on this first fact, nothing after can annul or weaken; He has made you, and exists still in the relationship of your Maker.

It might have been that the Maker abandoned His work and cared not for it, or gave it the

liberty to follow the dictates of its own choice. But it is not so. Your Maker claims your service, and His claim is paramount above all others.

I do not wish now to mix up this claim with the other stronger claim of Redemption—the claim of the second Creation. The first claim has never been weakened. It comes as forcibly to you as it did to Adam, when first made in the image of God he was bidden to dress and till the Garden of Eden.

GOD has given you a work to do for Him. There is not one without a special charge. It is a work for which we are each responsible, and for which we shall each be called to give an account.

GOD who has assigned you your work has the right to it. His Almightiness, as evidenced in Creation, it is hopeless to resist. His Goodness, as shewn in all provision made for our wants, is an additional reason for compliance with His will. He the source of all Life, the element in which alone is Life, and the end and object to which all Life tends, He, the God of Creation and the God of Providence, demands your service, and expects your love.

Seek to know this Great God more and more:

to know Him in His Revelation : to know Him in the works of His Creation : and to know Him in the course of His Providence. You are not to confine your study of Him to the contents of Scripture. Read His character in His works, as well as His character in His Word. The two writings agree together, there is no contradiction. Each point to God's claim upon you. The works point to the claim of Creation ; the Word points to it also, but at the same time it increases and intensifies the claim, by adding also the claim of Redemption. For both Scripture and Creation declare that "the Earth is the Lord's and the "fulness thereof, the world and they that dwell "therein."

Learn therefore the bearing of the one upon the other,

Thou hast made me, therefore I am Thine.  
I am Thine, therefore save me from all sin,  
Thy new Creation for ever.

## *LENTEN DISCIPLINE.*

1 COR. IX. 25.

*"And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible."*

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We are exhorted in Scripture to endure hardness. There are two ways in which we may do so. The first by taking the necessary hardships which come in our ordinary Christian course, by never shirking any call of duty, by being always ready to discharge any disagreeable office, or to do any hard work that comes before us in the common course of our lives. The second is by imposing upon ourselves certain restraints, by performing certain exercises, by entering on certain courses of self-denial that we may choose to lay down for ourselves.

It is this second way that we now have more definitely before us. And the point I wish to insist on, is that these special exercises of self-discipline ought to have as their immediate object the making us better able to endure the hardness

of our regular calling. The Apostle is apparently speaking here of his ordinary practice, but he shortly passes into what was extraordinary. Here he speaks of being temperate in all things, or as the original more accurately states it, having self-mastery in all things, having himself well in hand, as the habit of his life. But he passes on to speak of self-discipline which must needs have been resorted to at special seasons. "I keep "under my body," the original word points to the blows delivered by a combatant on the body of his adversary. It points therefore to hard and severe discipline. "I keep under my body and "bring it into subjection, lest that by any means "when I have preached to others, I myself should "be a cast away."

Therefore it is very useful for us to remember in all our self-discipline the special end before us, Self-discipline is not in itself the end—it is a means to an end. The end is being a better soldier of Christ, more successful in our conflict for the glory of Almighty God.

And consequently the self-discipline, or the self-mastery of which we speak, takes a much wider field than merely abstinence from food, or from special kinds of food. Fasting is but one

small portion of this wide subject. Though it may be well for us to remember that self-discipline in this matter ought to be made to serve the general end of self-government in the matters of eating and drinking. I make no apology for thus speaking plainly and using the straightforward language of our mother tongue, when I say that greediness, or gluttony, though generally associated with childhood, is alas a failing, possibly an increasing failing of a large number of grown up men and women. It is not merely excess in eating and drinking, but the thought bestowed upon the niceties of cooking, the conversation expended upon the delicacies of the table—the money worse than wasted—the time sacrificed not merely while feasting is going on, but also afterwards,—and probably the injury to health that follows as the only possible result. These things ought not to be among the followers of Christ. They are inconsistent with the calling to take up the cross and follow the Master. And therefore it may be well for us in any self-imposed abstinence to humble ourselves for sins in this respect, and to direct our special abstinence for the season towards obtaining a lasting moral victory in the matter of food.

Take another instance. There is a discipline which some people are in the habit of resorting to at this season, the discipline of early rising. We need not say how desirable it is that we should always have ourselves well in hand with regard to time spent unnecessarily in sleep. Time is a talent, a talent given for use and for improvement for the good of man, for the glory of Almighty God. And therefore while rest is necessary for these poor bodies of ours, yet we must see that as we are to be temperate in all things, so we must be temperate in the time spent in bed. In this matter we are more creatures of habit than perhaps we fancy, and therefore it is very well to use this as a self-discipline, not merely that the spirit may assert its mastery, but also that the special discipline now may assist us to correct permanently what has hitherto been sinful and displeasing to God.

*Sinful and displeasing to God.* I use the term advisedly. I mean it. To spend time in luxurious slumber which ought to be given with all morning freshness to the worship of God, and the study of His Word, is a practice which unfits the spirit for advance in the divine life. It is the misuse of talents at the opening of the day. It

is a bad start for the business of life. We may easily consent to it. We succumb to the temptation with scarcely any resistance. We hush our consciences with such easy excuses, that it is necessary that we should have the truth very plainly spoken, and be told that this long lying in our beds is an offence to God, and detrimental to our spiritual progress.

Let us all therefore consider whether it may not be well for us through this season to rise earlier than usual, to curb the flesh in this matter, and so to form a habit for the future, that we may redeem time for useful exercise.

If you would survey the great end of life, the object that you have to pursue, the calling of God, the connection between the present and the future, then surely you will see the importance of bringing force to bear upon yourself, of denying yourself in many things lawful, in order that you may quit yourself like a man and be strong, that you may have all the powers of body, and all the activities of mind, and all the forces of the spirit united and braced together, that you may serve God acceptably, that you may assist in extending the Kingdom of Christ, and hastening on the speedy return of the Son of Man.

## *GOD'S HELP THROWN AWAY.*

(EMBER WEEK.)

2 COR. VI. 1.

*"We then as workers together with Him beseech you also, that ye receive not the grace of God in vain."*

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THESE words assert an important truth ; and all the more important because pointing to rather an ominous conclusion. For they speak of the possibility of receiving the grace of God, and yet being none the better for that grace. And also they seem to assert that the receiving the grace of God, either in vain, or not in vain, is a matter which depends upon ourselves.

Some may perhaps think that because they are not leading godly lives they have therefore never received the grace of God. The absence of any result, they imagine, is a proof that there has never been any gift bestowed.

But it is not so. We have all received some-  
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thing. There is not one but has received grace. Every time you have entered a Church you have received grace. Every time you have read the Bible, or heard it read ; every time you have bent the knee in prayer ; every time from childhood upwards that you have had good influence brought to bear upon you, you have been receiving grace. When the Gospel has been preached to you and the over-flowing love of the compassionate Saviour has been proclaimed, you have received grace. Each time that the Spirit of God has prompted you to good, each struggle in your heart, each compunction for sin has been a receiving of grace. So that I am bold to say that there is not one who has not received grace.

But there is such a thing as receiving it in vain. You receive in vain when no effect is produced, or an effect of only momentary duration. You receive in vain when you harden your heart and determine that these things shall exert no influence over you. You receive in vain, when the world fills your heart to the exclusion of religion, or when the lusts of the flesh overpower the impression for good as soon as it has been made. The wayside hearer received in vain, when the Devil carried off the seed : the hearer on the

stony ground received in vain : the hearer among the thorns equally received in vain.

Sad it is to see any not receiving at all, but sadder still to see any receiving in vain ; to see such mighty forces brought to bear to no purpose upon them ; to witness the discomfiture of the Holy Spirit ; to think of His being grieved, as His influence is quenched. And therefore we wonder not that the Apostle as his spirit went out in all affection to the Corinthians among whom he had laboured long, but among whom there were now springing up grievous sins, should with all-loving exhortation, as a worker together with God in bringing this grace to their doors, beseech them that they receive not the grace of God in vain.

For is it not true that we are personally responsible for the results of privilege ? If you are receiving grace, but not improving, where lies the fault ? Not in the grace ; not in the way in which it is brought home to you, but in you, in the attention you give, in the honesty of your purpose, in the simplicity with which you receive, in your efforts to profit.

This Ember Week brings this thought before us. The subject of the Ministry and its ex-

tension should turn our eyes inward, that we may enquire what is the effect of religion upon our own hearts and lives. These who are described in the text by the high title of workers together with God—these Ministers of God's Word and Sacraiments, have they as yet done my soul good, and if they have not, where does the fault lie? They are human it is true, and they often fail in the consistency of their lives, they fail often in faithfulness in delivering their message. But you cannot charge your low attainments on their defects. You have received through them, and through others, means of grace ; and receiving the grace, you ought not to receive it in vain.

Again, therefore, we beseech you by all the full mercies of our bountiful God,—by all the good things you have received from Him,—by all the chastisements by which He has corrected you,—by all the warnings with which He has arrested your progress,—by every revelation of His goodness,—by the great gift of His Holy Son to die for you,—by His mission of the Holy Spirit to plead with you,—Turn your opportunities to account; receive not the grace of God in vain.

## *THE DIVINE SUFFERER.*

(LENT.)

S. JOHN VIII. 58.

*"Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was I am."*

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THIS Sunday has from very ancient times been called Passion Sunday, for it was about this time that the Lord began His last journey to Jerusalem from the village of Ephraim. It was about this time that He took the twelve apart, and endeavoured more definitely to prepare their minds for the events which were now very shortly to happen. And yet we are told that it was hid from them, and they did not understand Him.

It has been considered well to mark this point in the history for our own use and profit. That as from next Sunday we shall be called to meditate directly on the events of the Passion,

so during this intervening time we may be preparing our minds for dwelling on that tremendous mystery.

And how shall we better do this, than by dwelling on the greatness of the Sufferer? That greatness is very strikingly brought before us in the services of the day. In the first lesson we have had the appearance of God to Moses at the bush when He revealed Himself under the mysterious Name, "I AM THAT I AM." A name ever treated with the utmost jealousy and reverence by every member of the nation of Israel.

In the Gospel for the day we have a discussion in the Temple, in which our Lord asserts his own essential dignity. He is asked about Abraham. He speaks of Himself as the joy of Abraham. He is asked about His age, and He replies in words which could have but one meaning to a Jewish mind. "Before Abraham was, I am." I question whether in the whole range of language He could have selected words that could have declared with such emphasis His oneness and equality with the Father.

Now on this truth let us endeavour to fasten. It is a definite thought for us to mingle with all the meditations of the holy season. That suffer-

ing Form we are to present to our minds, that Body which is to be exposed to the indignities and assaults of the multitude, that Frame which is to be bowed down in utter prostration on the cold ground:—it is the Form of Man : but Man who is very God. All this had been foreseen—foreseen long before Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees to lead a pilgrim life, and confessed that he was a stranger in the land of promise. All this was foreseen as part of the humiliation when He who is from everlasting condescended to take flesh in the Virgin's womb.

These sufferings have not issued from any failure in His plan,—they were from the first foreseen, they were definitely predicted, and they were cheerfully endured.

And as they were part of the eternal plan, so shall they work out the eternal design, the mighty purpose of everlasting Love.

It is important that we should bear this in mind, because the consideration of the sufferings naturally leads us to dwell rather on the true humanity than on the essential Divinity of the Sufferer. And yet we gain no adequate conception of those sufferings unless we connect them with His Godhead.

Behold the Everlasting I AM. Who was long before the earliest ages, before any of those periods of which geologists love to speak. Before the earliest of this earth's strata was as yet formed, yea, before this world was called into being, He was GOD. He, the Being that rules the universe and receives the adoration of all the heavenly host, is yet made lower than the Angels who serve Him, stoops to the vilest degradation, bears the heaviest agony, dies and is buried.

Behold Him then, my God, my Sin Bearer, and as you behold Him let your heart bleed at the thought of your sins contributing to that great load of sorrow. Let your heart be assured that He who has borne your sins and become your Redeemer is the Great Eternal I AM, from whose power there is no escape, and under whose footstool every foe shall be humbled. Contemplate the Divine Victim ; God made flesh for you ; God suffering for you ; God put to shame for you : that your sins may be pardoned and your soul eternally saved.

## *THE CONTRASTS IN HOLY WEEK.*

(PALM SUNDAY.)

S. MATT. XXI. IX.

*"Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the Lord."*

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IT is remarkable that though the entry into Jerusalem took place as on this day, yet neither in the Lesson or the Gospel for the day is the fact brought before us. And yet I think it well that we should have it under our notice, if only that we might mark the contrasts, the sharp contrasts, which the history of these last few days contains. There had all through the Saviour's life been contrasts, in proportion as the two sides of His Nature—the human and the divine—were brought forward. But never, perhaps, were these contrasts so conspicuous as in the last few days. Never was the human element brought so low, and yet from out of it there were from time to

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time the flashings forth of the Divine. But to confine ourselves to the contrast suggested by the triumphal entry. When the royalty of Christ is the predominant idea, when He appears as the accepted, the Chosen one of the Jewish Nation, how soon was their choice to be reversed. How sudden the change to "Not this 'man, but Barabbas.'" The same contrasts run through the whole. As when Herod's men of war mocked Him with their crown placed on His sacred brow. A crown, but one of thorns. Or as when Pilate placed the inscription on the cross by which He was designated as the King of the Jews.

It is the contrast between the Divinity and the oppressed humanity, between the royalty that was His indeed and the ignominy to which He was exposed.

It is a useful study to mark these contrasts, because they contain a lesson most useful for us to learn during all the solemnities of this holy week. There is on the one side the Kingship, the Majesty of the Son of God—that which was His by right: and there is on the other side, the humiliation, and the weakness, and the suffering of the Son of Man—that to which our sins

brought Him down. Mark the contrast well, and fix it in your minds, in order that you may gain some data by which you may measure the magnitude of Sin.

It is always a dangerous thing to spend our time of meditation on the death of Christ in a mere sentimental sympathy with His sufferings, unless we bring the whole to a practical issue, and learn to hate sin more. The address to the daughters of Jerusalem has still need to be repeated again and again—"Weep not for Me, but "weep for yourselves and for your children."

There is a danger lest at this time, the suffering manhood being our principal thought, we should forget the Godhead of the Sufferer; and therefore the magnitude and significance of the Sacrifice. The one Sacrifice which availeth so much.

It is the combination of those two natures which supplies the inexhaustibility of this theme. It is this which enables us to come again, year by year, and meditate with freshness and concentration of thought on the spectacle of the Agony, the Betrayal, and the Crucifixion.

And therefore it is well for us to check exaggerations of view in either direction by the re-

membrance of the twofold truth—the truth which would struggle towards an outward expression in these contrasts of which we are speaking.

May God grant that our religious exercises through this holy week may bring us into close union with the Divine Sufferer, and that we may be so penetrated by His Spirit that we may be crucified with Him, and that through the grave and gate of death we may pass to our joyful resurrection.

## **THE HOUSE OF PRAYER.**

**(MONDAY IN HOLY WEEK.)**

**MARK XI. 17.**

*“My House shall be called of all nations the House of Prayer.”*

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It was as on this day that the Lord for the second time cleansed the Temple at Jerusalem. He had made His entry on the Sunday and marked at that time the profanation that was going on. The night was spent at Bethany, and early on the Monday morning He came again to the Temple. Two years previously He had, as S. John has recorded, driven out of the Temple the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money, and overthrown the tables. Possibly the profanation now was somewhat less —at all events there is not such strong language used with respect to the cleansing. Whether so or not, the point I desire to notice is that the

second cleansing, like all other things in this last week, was done with special reference to His death.

He was about to die. Many men about to die are heedless of what they do, they allow many things to pass unnoticed which they would not at other times. What matters it, they think, I shall be off the scene, it will be much the same in a short time. In this particular case there was also the fact that the previous cleansing had not produced any enduring effect. But this was not the way with the Saviour. He will not allow His Father's honour to be insulted, He will not suffer the holy House to be defiled, even when His own death is immediately before Him. Now again will He assert His own property in the Temple, the Temple which received its glory from His presence in it. How was the Temple now being defiled by these illicit traffickers, even as His feet were treading its outer courts, who was conferring the highest honour that ever that sacred Building ever had. The two processes of defilement and honouring shall not go on again at the same time, and therefore He expelled these buyers and sellers, and stopped their illegal trade. It is a lesson to us of the purity of the House of God, and

the zeal which God's children ought ever to have for its honour.

But there is deeper significance still, one very precious to us. Our Lord was now in the outer court, the Court of the Gentiles. These Jewish tradesmen perhaps thought that it did not much signify what they did in these outer precincts of the Temple, provided they did not invade the Jewish courts, or the places of sacrifice. But our Blessed Lord will have the Court of the Gentiles kept holy and preserved from profanation equally with those allotted to the Jews. Even now before His death, before His Church had been thrown open wide—now in the time of exclusiveness and narrow nationality, He would call to remembrance what had before been predicted, that God's House is a House of prayer for all nations. Even the despised Gentiles had their privileges and their rights. They might worship in those courts, and their worship was to be respected.

Thus did the Lord before He offered up Himself in sacrifice assert the catholicity of His own work. Thus did He, as He was preparing for the last struggle, ere the depths of His Passion were reached, publicly allude to the world-embracing purposes of the Everlasting Father. And thus

did He impress upon His own mind the universality of the ransom He was about to pay. The whole world in its completeness, every age of the world's history in all its successive cycles is comprehended. Every tribe of the great family of man He had now in His mind. We in our far-off position both of time and place were included in His comprehensive glance, and were amongst the all nations for whom He was about to die.

We read so much of the Jewish nation in these closing scenes, and we are accustomed to think so much of the share that nation had in our Lord's last sufferings, that we at times perhaps forget how much also the Gentiles were brought into direct contact with it. Here we have our Lord clearing their court of the Temple and asserting their interest in that House of Prayer. Later on we have the Lord delivered over to the Gentiles, and we find them no less than the Jews implicated in the guilt of crucifying the Lord of Glory.

Let us assure ourselves that in that sad week, as the Son of Man allowed His prophetic thoughts to pass onward down the stream of time, He saw us in our present condition. He thought of us in our varied phases

of thought and feeling. He included us in His great loving pity. He laid down His life for us, a ransom for our sins, and fixed the foundation firm and deep on which the hopes of humanity in all its branches, might rest securely to the end.

## **TEMPLE TEACHINGS.**

**(TUESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.)**

**JOHN XII. 32.**

*"I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me."*

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It seems most probable that these words were uttered on the Tuesday of the last week, a day marked rather by discourses of wisdom than by deeds of power. The occasion was remarkable. Our Lord was teaching in the Temple when a message was brought to Him that certain Greeks (probably proselytes of the gate) desired to see Him; Greeks, not Grecian Jews. The very fact pointed to the same truth we were yesterday considering—the world-embracing character of the Saviour's mission. All done this last week had reference to the end, and it is in this connection that we must consider this remarkable scene.

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They selected a disciple whose name pointed to some Greek affinity, as their introducer to Jesus Christ, and their request was not made in vain.

On the contrary, the Lord recognises in their wish another triumph of His Kingdom. The wish of these aliens to be brought into contact with Him He takes as an unconscious testimony to the universality of His Kingdom. Their coming is a token of glory. "The hour is come "that the Son of Man should be glorified." Strange words from Him who for several preceding days had been speaking of His own decease—a decease amidst all external signs of shame and degradation. And yet it was so. These Gentiles seeking His Presence were evidence that now that suffering was to purchase blessings even for them. This request carried on His thoughts, so that they passed the boundaries of the Jewish nation by which He was surrounded, and brought before His all-seeing mind the desires, conscious or unconscious, of the whole family of man. And it was because of this universality, that, with death in view and all the associations of violence and public execution, He yet could say "The hour is come that the Son of "Man should be glorified."

And to shew that He was not losing sight of the inevitable future, He immediately began to speak of His approaching death. The hour for His being glorified was come, and yet even He must die. The hour of glory was come, for narrow exclusiveness was being broken down, and yet He who was breaking it down must pass off the scene.

The contrast was sharp, and trouble of mind ensued : " Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say ? Father, save Me from this hour ; " but for this cause came I to this hour—Father, " glorify Thy Name." In answer to His prayer a voice from Heaven assured Him. And then He proceeds with the words selected for our text —words which follow up this double thought, the thought of His death, and the thought of His victory,—“ I, if I be lifted up from the earth, “ will draw all men unto Me.”

You see that while death was before Him, and the peculiar character of His death, crucifixion, He yet could speak of the effects of that death as reaching far and wide through the tribes of human kind. And I cannot but think that He supported His human soul in the approaching conflict, and braced it up for the tremendous demands that were to be made upon it, by

thought of the far reaching benefits that He would confer on the race of man. It gives us a grand idea of the Saviour's character that that thought should cheer Him, and that He should consider that His manifestation to the Gentiles should be indeed the hour in which He should be glorified. So that He could stay His soul with the thought "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all "men unto me."

And as we dwell upon this remarkable connection of ideas, in this our meditation on the Saviour's passion, we may well endeavour to soar in imagination as we try to grasp the extent of the issues involved in that fearful struggle. The issue was no less than the eternal salvation of mankind. Mankind in its fullest and largest sense. Here is the one Name, the only Name under Heaven, by which we must be saved. The Crucified Saviour draws men to Himself. The Cross acts as a magnet on the hearts of awakened consciences. All men ; this does not mean that all men will be saved. But it does mean that there is in the Crucified Saviour salvation for all that come ; aye, and that there is an attraction in Him for all, whether they know it or not. You cannot point out one soul on whom this power

will not work. Here alone is the problem of life adequately solved.

Therefore as we follow the Divine Sufferer step by step through His course of sorrows, let us remember the magnitude of the triumph He was all the while achieving, the world-wide interest in the struggle, the stake that was at issue, and the end certain and foreseen in the Divine omniscience. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, " will draw all men unto Me."

## *THE INTERCESSORY PRAYER.*

(WEDNESDAY IN HOLY WEEK.)

S. JOHN XVII. 20.

*"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in Me through their word."*

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It does not appear from this Gospel narrative that any thing particular happened on the last Wednesday, after our Lord's utterance with respect to the Greeks who wished to see Him. He retired, as we learn from S. John, into strict retirement, "These things spake Jesus and departed, and did hide Himself from them." The Wednesday we may therefore suppose, was spent in perfect seclusion. The Thursday however was more eventful. There was the preparation for the Passover, and the sorrowful Meal, followed by the washing the Disciples' feet. There was the declaration about Judas and the institution of the Last Supper; there was the giving the new

commandment, whence the day has taken its name of Maunday, or Mandate Thursday. Then there were the discourses of Comfort, the Intercessory Prayer and the singing the Hymn, all previous to the Agony in the Garden. Every moment of time was occupied, and of all this we notice that it had reference to the end. The account in S. John commences with recounting the fact that "Jesus knew that His hour was come "when He should depart out of the world to the "Father." All was being done, and all most unselfishly done for this end, the preparing others for His departure.

And now at last He begins to gird Himself up, and gather Himself into the attitude of prayer. Prayer—that is the exercise by which He would strengthen Himself for the coming conflict : Communion with the everlasting Father. And first He prays directly for Himself, that He Himself may be glorified, and then He prays for the Disciples who had been given Him, that they may be kept and that they may be sanctified. And then He carries on His thoughts and prays not for the disciples only, but for all His people to the end of time, that they all may be one, and that they may behold His glory.

Think of the position of the praying Lord, and see what confidence this prayer implies. He sees His own conflict before Him, but He rises above that conflict. He sees the bereavement of His Disciples, but He soars above that bereavement. And in His trust in the Truth of God He carries on His thoughts through the revolving cycles of the future, and sees His Church carrying on the succession of the Faith, as age succeeds to age. Looking down through the vista of time He sees the Church, the Church established by the crucifixion that is about to be: the Word given: the Word preached: the Word believed in.

Thus was He preparing for the gigantic encounter. Thus did He seek for strength, when He knew that all strength was needed. He sought strength in Prayer, and of all Prayer there is most strength to be found in Intercessory. You may take it as an axiom, there are times when you will find personal prayer difficult: then betake yourself to Intercessory prayer for others, and think of the Saviour preparing Himself for the mighty conflict by engaging in prayer for us.

We have been noticing some evidences of the large views He took when in the prospect of death. This passage is another instance. At

this moment as the shades of evening were gathering a thicker darkness, just before Gethsemane, and the apprehension, He leaps over in thought all the intervening struggle. He sees the Apostles strong in the Spirit, bearing the message of the kingdom on from realm to realm, the Apostles themselves passing away, and others raised up in their room, the Church continuing and spreading, upholding the same message in its integrity—salvation through the Cross. And as the sight opens before His prophetic vision, His heart goes forth to all the new-born into the Family. “Neither “pray I for these disciples alone but for them “also which shall believe on ME through their “word.” All are included in His prayer, because all are included in His Love.

At that time we were present to His mind, because we were present to His heart. He prayed for us, because we were dear to Him. And how did He pray? What was the prayer, when quickened by the sense of terrible realities He brought us in supplication before the Heavenly Father. It was the prayer for union, “That they all may “be one.” He saw as we know the wide differences that would exist, differences of temperament, of race, of clime, of age, of sex, of mental culture,

of spiritual advancement. But this is the prayer, that His children with all their differences might be one. He prays that they may sink their personalities in the life of the one Family, that being all drawn to Him as the centre they may find a bond of union drawing them in closer love to each other, and that thus in the ages to come He might be glorified in their union.

Can we think of this petition being that by which the Saviour strengthened Himself for the Passover and the Cross, and yet make no effort after godly union and concord? Shall we indulge in the passions of narrow partisans, when the Saviour thus sighed for charity and loving union ? Let each of us in the view of His Cross seek for the Master's mind and the realization of the Master's prayer, "That they all may be one as "Thou Father art in Me and I in 'Thee, that they "also may be one in us, that the world (the world "in all its wide extent) may believe that Thou "hast sent Me."

## *THE PASCHAL HYMN.*

(THURSDAY IN HOLY WEEK.)

S. MARK XIV. 26.

*"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives."*

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THE Passover had now been eaten. The Lord's Supper had been instituted. Probably the washing of the disciples' feet had taken place, and the long discourses, recorded at length by S. John, had been spoken. And now ere they left the chamber, the Lord with the eleven disciples (the traitor had left them) sung an hymn, and then they went to the accustomed spot on the Mount of Olives. We do not know for certain what this hymn was. It has generally been believed to have been a portion of those Psalms called the Great Hallel, which it was customary to sing at the Passover.

What I want however chiefly to notice is the  
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preparation our Lord made for those intense sufferings which He knew were now immediately before Him.

He had already strengthened Himself in the Passover Feast, He now strengthens Himself by an act of united praise. It is a remarkable spectacle, the Lord standing up with the Eleven round Him, and with men's voices singing to some Hebrew chant the inspired Psalm written some ten centuries before. There was great trouble before them. No other company had ever greater to face. They all knew it, because the Lord had told them. It was the concentrated trouble of the whole world. And yet this is the time, and the one only recorded time, when CHRIST and His disciples joined together in singing a hymn of praise to GOD.

Strange thoughts rise in our minds as we contemplate the Son of God engaged in praise to the Father. We are often called to contemplate the mystery of His Prayers : once only this, the mystery of His Praise.

And yet this is an example intended to help us in the prospect of great sorrow. Whenever any great sorrow is impending, or even bursting over us, whenever we are called to pass through some

trial of unusual severity there is nothing strengthens us so much for meeting it, as praising God. I do not mean praising Him on account of the sorrow or trial—that would be forced and unnatural ; but praising Him for those things for which we can honestly and with all sincerity tender Him our grateful thanks. Some there are, but they are very few, who can praise for the trial itself; as a general rule that would be a hollow and empty exercise. Men are not thankful, and are hardly expected to be thankful for that which is grievous at the time.

There are however always subjects at hand : we need never be at a loss for topics of praise. That Paschal company in their darkest hour had their songs in the night to sing. There are always God's perfection and glory to be rehearsed. There is always the long course of uninterrupted mercies to praise Him for : His goodness to His Church and His goodness to the individual. There are the promises He has made ; the covenant He has established. There are past deliverances, there are present alleviations. And nothing so strengthens the spirit as having these thoughts present, and nothing brings them nearer than exercises of Praise, and of all exercises

Praise, especially common Praise : it expands the mind : it warms the heart.

The singing this hymn was the last recorded collective act of Christ and His disciples before the crucifixion. After this they left the room, and we hear of no more until Jesus in the company of only three enters into the darkness of the garden. This fact seems to point us to the importance of making Praise the end of life. All our teaching, all our discipline, all our worship and our service are to point in this direction. Our lives taken as a whole are to be an Anthem of Praise. If we take our Lord and His disciples living together as having points of affinity with our common family life, this hymn should direct us to endeavour to make the life of the whole family a life of Praise. If we take it as being the life of the Church, then should we not strive by overcoming the differences in the Church to make the life of the whole a life of Praise.

Let the thought stimulate us all, and rouse us to the strengthening exercise, that so we may more cheerfully and courageously meet the trials which we know must be before us.

## *THE SIN BEARER.*

(GOOD FRIDAY.)

ISAIAH LIII. 6.

*"The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."*

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It is remarkable how as we approach the Sacrifice of CHRIST we find everything pointing to its world-wide importance. There had been much of this at our Lord's birth, there is more at His death. At His birth Jew and Eastern Gentile had worshipped at His cradle. The Angel host and aged Simeon had alike proclaimed the wide significance of His appearing—but now that the Divine Victim is to be slain, the universality of resulting blessings becomes more apparent still. We find Jew and Gentile agreeing in one thing—the Crucifixion. The Jew without the Roman could not have inflicted the penalty of death, and so not the Sanhedrim alone, but the Roman Governor also, unite in the terrible wor-

Calculations have been made which render it probable that one half of the whole Jewish population were now assembled in and around Jerusalem ; and the rejection by them is justly counted as rejection by the nation. The Governors of Jerusalem and Galilee also agree, and so the condemnation is complete. It is the work of man: man in his entirety—man crucifying the Son of Man—and then gathered round the Cross we find those who even then were more or less moved by the sad and terrible sight. Take the pious women and the disciple whom Jesus loved—take the Jewish malefactor hanging on the cross by His side—take the Roman centurion, and you have Asiatic and European. Add to these another, whose birth-place seems to have been recorded with the special purpose of letting us know that the Africans were represented also—Simon a Cyrenian was compelled to bear His Cross ; Simon, whose sons are recorded by name as well known by the Christians of later years. Here then we have representatives of the three divisions of the world, of the three sons of Noah, gathered round Him who in His death was bearing the iniquity of us all.

Or carry the thought still further, it was the

iniquity of all the ages, from Adam downwards to that of those who will be alive at the second Coming—the sin of humanity, that Christ was then bearing: for He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

Let us each then now on this solemn day, as we bring each incident of these terrible occurrences before our minds, carry home the conviction—I am concerned in that Sacrifice. The Sin Bearer is carrying my sin. I am the cause of some of these sufferings. It is for me the Lord of Glory, very God of very God is hanging on the tree of shame. Those wounds are bleeding for my sins. Without that suffering I could not be saved. As you follow Him in the march outside the city walls and see Him faint beneath the weight of the cross, as you witness the Roman soldiers strip Him and nail His sacred hands and feet; as you hear His meek prayer of forgiveness for His murderer's; as you call up the insolences of the passers by, the brutalities of the soldiers, remember it was for your sins.

And later, when the pall of darkness was spread over the whole land, and the powers of hell made their last and their fiercest assault upon Him in the hour of His greatest weakness, and dre-

from Him at length the piteous cry, "My God, " My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me :" recognise the terrible and yet sweetly encouraging truth, that it was for you He suffered, paying down the ransom of your soul, the sinless One suffering in the place of you, a sinner.

Know for your exceeding comfort that this indeed is so, because the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

## **THE RESURRECTION.**

**(EASTER.)**

**1. CORINTHIANS XV. 20.**

*"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept."*

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FIRST fruits were connected in the Jewish mind with each of their three Feasts. It was a happy joyful association. It was on the morning of the day after the Passover Sabbath, that is on the very morning of our Lord's Resurrection, that the Paschal first fruits were presented. The sheaf of corn that was first cut was waved in the Temple as an offering to God. It spoke of all the bounteous harvest that was to follow. It symbolized the truth that it all came from God, and that the first of His gifts should be consecrated to Him.

We do well to remember this on our glorious Easter Morning. We have cast aside the penitential garb and are arrayed in the garments of

Praise. It is a happy, joyous, yea, triumphant festival, the anniversary of the Great Victory achieved for mortal man.

It is questionable how far the type is to be pressed, and so we will only use it as an illustration of the festive joy which Christians should feel, now that *He* has risen from the dead, the sure Forerunner of the general resurrection of the buried just.

The bonds that held the buried Lord were broken, the law released its Victim, its demands having been fully met. The king of Death could not keep His Prisoner, hard as he doubtless tried. The seal on the sepulchre was of no avail, the stone could not bar the exit of the Son of God.

In calm majestic dignity He rose, there were no signs of haste, the cast off grave clothes all scrupulously folded up and neatly left. And He came forth the Victor over that dreaded foe which had kept mankind so long subject to bondage. It is a day of release, a day of triumph, a day of deepest thankfulness. For we shall have to go down to that grave where so many of our departed friends have already gone; we too must pass into that unknown, where the spirits of mankind have been and still are gathering so fast.

But our Easter morning with the First fruits assures us of the general Resurrection, it bids us look on beyond even the rest of Paradise, it tells of the great awakening of those that sleep in Jesus; the re-union of body and spirit on that great harvest morning.

Therefore while we dwell upon all the present comfort which we derive from the Resurrection, all the proof that sin has been indeed put away, that our Lord is the conqueror over Satan, that God has accepted the Sacrifice of His Son, we are to look forward in joyful hope to the final ingathering of the harvest, to the full shocks of ripe corn to be brought from every tribe and people into the heavenly garner of the Lord.

The rising of the First fruits is a pledge and token that the side of Christ is the side of the Conqueror. You may have your doubts and be tried with perplexities, as you endeavour to unravel the mystery of the present. But there can be no doubt, if you accept the signs given you, of the eventual issue, they speak no uncertain language, they point to no uncertain end. The Resurrection of our Lord so long predicted and shadowed forth is the earnest of what the result must be; it has been settled in the purposes of

Almighty God, it has been revealed consistently from one end of Scripture to the other. The Victory final and complete, the Harvest perfect and secured, shall be His, who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Therefore let every trembling doubter cast away his fears and his indecision. Here is firm and solid ground to rest on, yea the very Rock of Ages.

The struggle continues but the issue has been decided, no effort can roll back the vantage gained at the first Resurrection; you may trust with an undoubting heart, you may rest without one misgiving. To Him shall every knee be bowed, to Him shall every tongue confess.

Meanwhile with that happy future before us, with all the joy of our Lord's Coming to gladden our weary spirits, let us now shew forth His Death till He come, resting on the fulness of His perfected sacrifice, the sacrifice declared this day to be complete, as our great hope of acceptance in the grand Harvest gathering when He shall come again rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him.

## *THE EASTER HOPE.*

*(EASTER.)*

*ROMANS VI. 9, 10.*

*"Knowing that CHRIST, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto GOD."*

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How suddenly does Easter each year burst upon us. The solemnities of Holy Week following as they do upon the humiliation of Lent, have been calling forth the sobered chastened feelings connected with the sufferings, death, and burial of the Lord. These are now all suddenly changed for the triumph and the hope of Easter. The same suddenness of change was experienced by the small band of disciples. For them it was even more sudden, because they were unprepared, and hence the suddenness caused in them a very natural excitement; they were so bewildered that they could not at first understand that the Resurrection was an accomplished fact.

But from this has followed a consequence for  
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which we cannot be too thankful. It led them to sift, and try, and examine, and prove the truth of the Resurrection ; and that examination has resulted in a body of evidence perfectly overwhelming. Of all events in history none has been established on more certain grounds than this, the greatest event in all history, the Resurrection of our Blessed Lord Jesus Christ. Those who knew the Lord best, His form, His manner, His tone of voice, His expression : those who had seen Him taken down from the cross, and who had assisted at His burial are the men who are so convinced of the truth of His Resurrection, that they risked everything they had in this world in order that they might give evidence—not to a doctrine about which they might be mistaken—but to a fact about which there could be no mistake. Let us then turn this suddenness to our profit ; for the sharp contrast thus defined may well bring out in full prominence the Joyousness and the Hopefulness of Easter. It is a summer morning bursting upon us in the coldness of a mid-winter night.

The humiliation is past. The Lord is risen indeed. Death, with the shame of death, the sufferings of death, and the curse of death is over;

for “ in that He died, He died unto sin once”—henceforth it is to be all life, life with its freshness, its activities, its enjoyments, its holiness—for “in “that He liveth, He liveth unto God.”

It is perhaps the suddenness of transition which makes it difficult for us to take in the comprehensiveness of the victory we are celebrating to-day. The effects of the victory are more universal than many think.

The Son of God having taken flesh and become man, the Second Adam, the Representative of our race, the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, enters into conflict with the enemies of human kind. All that makes against us, the causes of all our sufferings, the foes of all our peace were met by Him. Sin in all its forms, sin in all its consequences, was attacked by the great champion of mankind. Physical evil, morale evil, spiritual evil, evil in the world animate and the world inanimate, was ever being met by Him and opposed. The conflict as we know culminated at the Cross, and to human eyes it seemed as though the conflict had ended in disaster, and that man’s cause had failed and Satan’s cause had triumphed, and that henceforth the bondage would become more bitter, and hope would be

nowhere, and sin develope into still more hideous and blacker forms than ever.

The Rising on Easter Morning reversed it all. The seeming victor is proved vanquished, and man's apparent defeat turns out to be man's accomplished triumph.

And so the victory proclaims not merely the issue of some one encounter, it is the result of the whole campaign, it reaches to the whole race of man, from the first Adam to the last that shall be born until the second Advent, it includes all the generations and all the tribes of humankind. The redemption is complete, man as man is redeemed man, he lives in a redeemed world, he serves with redeemed powers, his privileges are redeemed, his talents are redeemed, his life is redeemed. Such is the glad message of this Easter morning, coming to us with as true a joy as it did to the disciples in their blank amazement of despair. We are bidden to believe that the penalty of the law has been paid and a release granted, that the way to the Father, once shut, is now open. We are assured that it is possible for us to serve God, that our Leader is able to help us as we contend with His foes and fight His battle. And we have also the pledge

of the Resurrection of our bodies. The body we sow at the grave, when the earthly remains are buried out of sight, we sow corruptible, natural, weak, dishonourable, but through the strength of the Resurrection it shall be raised incorruptible, spiritual, powerful, and glorious.

And therefore it is that this festival is so pre-eminently the festival of Hope. Our message carries us on to the future—the distant future we sometimes call it—but it may be much nearer than we fancy, that time when the Easter first fruits shall be followed by the full ingathering, and when our Forerunner through the gates of the grave shall introduce His people to the prepared mansions in His Father's House.

Look up then and go on your way in joyful confidence. Go with all Easter hopefulness and all Easter gladness to do the work which still remains to be done. Having died to sin, now henceforth live unto God ; live unto Him in all faithful obedience, in all hopeful activity, in all increasing holiness and in lively expectation of that glad future to which the Easter message transports us.

## **THE RISEN LIFE.**

**(FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)**

**S. JOHN XX. 19.**

*"The same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."*

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THE Risen appearances of our Lord seem to have been specially designed to train the disciples to realise the great truth of the present dispensation, namely, the presence of our Lord with us. Not indeed that this is only a New Testament truth ; it was an Old Testament truth as well. The visions of God vouchsafed to Patriarch and Prophet carried out the same teaching. The pillar that preceded the host of Israel, the glory in the Temple, the mysterious Urim and Thummim, these all taught the same lesson. Every declaration of the Omnipresence of Jehovah proclaimed it also. So that the truth now was not

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a new one—it was only that it was brought out more distinctly, and impressed by a new process upon the minds of men.

Now it is hardly too much to say that the presence of Christ with His people is the great lesson we have still to learn ; that the mastering of this truth is the one great business of our lives ; that we come near to, or fall short of the standard we should reach, just in proportion as we lay hold of or as we reject the belief in Emmanuel : God with us.

For it must have struck you as at least remarkable, that of our two Christian sacraments one should be especially the witness of Christ's presence with His Church. So that when Christians meet together in solemn service the truth, that Christ is with them, should be thus frequently, thus solemnly impressed upon their minds.

1. We need it that we may be more careful to please God and keep His commandments. For could we apprehend with any force of distinctness that our unseen Lord is with us, that we live in His full sight, that every action is seen, every thought read, every motive even discerned, to what a different point of zeal should we be

roused, what continual conscious direction of our actions to the honour and glory of Almighty God. The Crucified Risen Saviour is indeed with us. It is no fancy, no dream, but sober vital truth. He is with us now, as much as any one of us is here.

2. We need to remember this also for our encouragement. How was it with the disciples? They were doubtless awe-struck, but what joy filled their hearts at the thought that He was with them. And why joy? Because they knew Him, and what He was to them. They had experienced His loving care, and *that* they knew was all the same to them that it had ever been. They needed that refreshment, and so do we. In this hurrying world, amid the strife of men, oppressed by the indifference of the world and the coldness of our own hearts, in the face of discouragements and backslidings, how much do we need the clear unmistakeable presence of the Son of God to draw forth our affections, to warm our love, to give greater earnestness and reality to our religious life.

The Risen Saviour is among us. He moves in our midst. He is here to encourage us, to assure us when gathered in His name, as He assured

the hearts of the gathered ten, and afterwards the gathered eleven, and later on the gathered five hundred. He is here to receive our sacrifices of prayer and praise, to accept our confessions of penitence, and our offerings of self-dedication. He is here to cheer and strengthen for the Christian contest, and bid us not be down-hearted amid the trials and troubles which beset us.

## *THE MISSIONARY COMMAND.*

S. MARK xvi. 15.

*"And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."*

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THERE are few things more surprising than the inexhaustible fulness of our Lord's Resurrection Life on earth. It occupied only forty days. Through the greater part of that time He was absent from His disciples. He appeared only at intervals; and of those appearances we have only fragmentary and condensed notice. Five chapters contain it all, and in those five chapters there are many incidents recorded in common. And yet what thoughtful student of Gospel narrative but will gladly confess that, as he comes again and again to the subject, he finds in it something fresh and invigorating. True as

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this remark is with regard to every portion of the Lord's history, most specially is it so with the Resurrection period, and one reason for this is to be found in the deep mystery attaching to the whole. Two worlds here meet in contact—the seen and the unseen, the material and the spiritual; or perhaps it would be more correct to say that the unseen, the spiritual, more largely predominates here than in the former life; that here we are more distinctly conscious of higher influences, and are brought face to face with other forces and facts than in ordinary existence.

Now, take one thought in connection with this short period, and notice how in it all the directions for the ministry of the Church that ever were given by the Saviour are comprised. With the exception of the institution of the Last Supper, which for obvious reasons took place at an earlier period, all the instructions for the ministry were imparted between the Resurrection and the Ascension. Then was the command given to feed the old and the young of Christ's flock—then the institution of Christian Baptism—then the order to begin preaching at Jerusalem, and to go forth from it as a centre and evangelise the world—then the eternal promise of the presence

of the Son of God with His people to the end of time, a promise intended for us. These things had not been definitely ordered before, they were definitely ordered now, ordered with all the impressiveness of parting commands, left as the legacy of the ascending Saviour.

Take only one part of this, that which the text suggests—the order for a world-wide preaching the good news of a Saviour's sacrifice. The disciples were not to leave matters to take their own course—to lead holy, useful lives, leaving the progress of the faith to the unobtrusive influence of their own goodness, or to the natural effects of their Christian example ; on the contrary, direct effort was to be brought to bear, exertion was to be made ; there was a sending on the part of the Son, there was to be journeying on the part of the commissioned—“ Go ye into all the world “ and preach the Gospel to every creature.” Those words still remain in force ; there was nothing to limit them to the Apostolic age ; their importance has not been weakened by the lapse of time ; they are as binding upon the Church in the nineteenth as they were in the first century, and they will be as binding until every individual living in this our world shall have had the offer of a

Saviour's love brought personally home to his particular case.

It might have appeared originally as though there was something wildly visionary and impractical in the orders. Take the number of the disciples even at the highest, let it include the 500 who probably clustered round the Risen One at the manifestation in Galilee, and yet even then, supposing that each had gone forth as a Christian herald, how impossible for them, without further aid, to preach the Gospel to every creature on the wide world.

The command has been obeyed in part, and yet how visionary it still appears to many of us. We know some of the difficulty of bringing the Gospel of the Lord Jesus to bear upon our home masses, and we know that the difficulty is far greater in preaching it to the heathen abroad.

But it is ever true that our duty is the same, however great the difficulties appear. Success is in other hands than ours; we are not called to speculate on probabilities. What we have to do is to obey the plain standing orders given by the Great Head of the Church.

Further, notice that the command as given here implies united and combined action. No one of

the Apostles would carry it out by himself, no section of the Church at any period of its history could singlehanded make any considerable progress. It is the same now. Each single Church must work—each part of each Church must work for this end. And it becomes our duty to assist the two great societies of our Church which are placing this object plainly before themselves—the one acting directly on the heathen, and the other working through the Church in our various colonies. Do not let us fall into the mistake of marshalling these two societies in party antagonism. Rather, with a large-hearted Christian charity, look on each as carrying out in its own way this Resurrection order.

There is indeed a remarkable catholicity in these Resurrection utterances. No longer do we hear, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of ‘the house of Israel.’” All the world, every nation, every creature, are included in the loving purposes of the risen Saviour, and we are in unison with His heart when we are equally world-wide in our love. Depend upon it, everything that hinders your affections going forth towards the great family of man is something opposed to the

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spirit of Christ. Why should we be more confined in our sympathies than He is? We cannot, it is true, rival his unmatched love, but we may be as comprehensive. Let us seek for His spirit, His catholic spirit of universal Charity, and obey according to our means His injunction, "Go ye "into all the world and preach the Gospel to every "creature."

## *THE FIRST FRUITS OF CREATION.*

(FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)

JAMES I. 18.

*"Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures."*

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THIS expression is peculiar, and will well repay our thoughtful meditation. S. James is speaking of the fact that we receive all our good from God, and He asserts here that we owe to Him all our spiritual life, and this spiritual life is given with the intention that we should be “a kind of first “fruits of His creatures.”

We know enough of the law of the first fruits given by Moses to see that reference is made to the offering of the first fruits to God. It was the universal law that the first born of man, the first born of cattle, the first yield of the earth should be specially devoted to Him.

What the first was to all others, that the Church of the Redeemed is to be with reference to all creatures.

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By creatures we are to understand in its widest extent all the creation of God—all the races of beings on this planet and throughout the boundless universe of space—so that the peculiar love shown to us, the peculiar privileges extended to us, are intended to raise us to an elevation above even the angelic races. The Son of God in redeeming us has done more than restore the race of man to the position he forfeited at the fall. He has destined us to a nobler future, He has prepared us for a higher position—the first fruits of the whole creation of God.

I stay not now to fortify this assertion by reference to other passages of Scripture, enough that we take this simple utterance in the earliest epistle that was written. It is well for us to lay hold of this truth. I do not think that when we look at our present state it is at all likely to fill us with pride. Meditation on what God has made ready for us will enlarge our poor contracted views, and make us more ready to submit to the necessary discipline which is preparing us for the prepared position.

And as this is to be so in the future, so should it partially be in the present. The Church of the Redeemed should be a kind of first fruits of the

race of man, each member given and dedicated to God, to be used as a holy vessel in His temple, each one a living sacrifice rendering a reasonable service, seen, known, and recognised as belonging to Him.

The more clearly you apprehend the wondrous future that awaits us the more readily will you admit the obligations and responsibilities of the present. The gifts of which the Epistle and Gospel of this day speak—the great gift which the risen Saviour has conferred upon us—are meant to leave their mark upon us, to influence our daily life, to raise our thoughts, to hallow our affections. This is the intention. But is it so?

Let this wonderful thought, for wonderful indeed it is, rouse you to a higher stage of Christian vigilance and effort. God has this design for you ; it comes entirely from Him, of His own will. For this the Lord of Life has died and risen—for this the Lord the Spirit has been shed forth. Trifle not in the presence of these overwhelming verities, but gird yourselves up to take your allotted part in these grand and stirring designs.

## **THE EARNEST OF VICTORY.**

**(FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.)**

S. JOHN XVI. 33.

*“In the world ye shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer,  
I have overcome the world.”*

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THESE words, with which our Lord closes this discourse of comfort to His disciples, have in all ages borne much consolation to His people. The most cursory reading of them, our first impression, conveys comfort. A general prophecy of the troubles of the Christian course, and a direction to look to Him, the victorious Captain, who by His victories has pledged victory to His followers, has a cheering sound. “In the world ye “shall have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I “have overcome the world.”

But as we examine the words more closely we find that there is in them a deeper mine of untold consolation.

**No. 23.**

You will remember that He has been speaking of believers being *in Him*—“*in Me* ye shall have “peace”—and the natural opposite to being “*in “Him”* is being “*in the world.*”

And consequently in our text we find this deep truth referred to—that our real trouble here comes from our being partly in the world. The worldly element is not completely subdued, we have not wholly renounced it in cleaving to our Master, there is still that within us which makes us have affinity with that which is without us, and this is that which causes us trouble. Were we, according to the ideal, all we ought to be, the afflictions and persecutions of the world could not disturb our peace. It is because of the worldly element in us that there is strife, and doubt, and anxiety, and humiliation. “In the world we “shall have (or rather, *ye have*) tribulation.”

How has all after experience proved the truth of these words. What has your own experience been? Has it not been that you have had tribulation because you were in the world and not in Christ.

Notice, then, the triumphant tone with which the discourse ends—“Be of good cheer”—be brave and courageous; this is a higher note than

has been sounded before—"Be of good cheer, I "have overcome the world."

The Saviour speaks with the victory in view, so sure and certain that He can speak of it as over and complete. "Be of good cheer" as you hide yourselves more completely under My shelter, "I have overcome," and in Me you overcome also.

We are shortly to celebrate the complete victory, when He was received in human nature on the Throne of the Eternal Father. It is a time to be much observed; but here we have the great and leading thought, that it is only as we are truly in Him that we shall overcome or avoid the tribulation and affliction of the world.

Therefore, let us prepare ourselves for entering on the mystery of the Ascension by a closer union than ever with the Lord. It all hinges upon that; you cannot be of good cheer, you cannot have peace, unless you realise that you are in Him, in union with Him, a member of His body, a partaker of His inheritance. And with this agrees the definition of true religion in the Epistle of the day, "To keep ourselves un-spotted from the world."

And you will notice how essential it is that for

this purpose we should take bright and encouraging thoughts. Religion is not intended to be an atmosphere of gloom ; it is in the world, and not in Christ, that we have tribulation. In our preparation, therefore, this week, during these Rogation or praying days, let us endeavour to be in a cheerful, thankful spirit, taking the Word of God, as He ever intended we should take it, naturally and simply, believing the promises which Christ has made as being really intended for our use and comfort, and carrying them into our daily lives for our advance and edification. *In Me.* What love the expression contains. How does it breathe the welcome that is extended to every weary one who accepts the invitation and takes refuge in the Saviour's covert. "In the world "ye have tribulation ; but be of good cheer, I "have overcome the world "

## **CHRIST A PRESENT KING.**

### **(ASCENSION.)**

**ACTS V. 31.**

*"Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and remission of sins."*

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LET us take for our short meditation the Kingship of the ascended Saviour; it is a subject of much comfort and encouragement.

The Kingdom had been spoken of, yea, taken for granted during His lifetime; though His followers had a very poor conception of its meaning. But it was not until He had perfected the Atonement that He entered upon the Kingdom. On the Ascension however the solemn inauguration of the Kingdom took place. Then He was conducted to the throne on which He must reign until all His enemies are put under His feet. He is "exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour."

We may describe His Kingdom as extending over three provinces for our good.

**No. 24.**

In our text one of these is mentioned, viz., sin. He is engaged in putting down sin, and He does it by working on our hearts, moving us to hate sin, to turn from sin, to grapple with sin, to watch against sin, and to overcome sin. All comes from the hand of the King, to whom all power in heaven and earth has been given.

Know this in your struggles, and use the thought as an encouragement to go forward.

And then further, as King He puts sin away by pardoning it. He treats sin that has been repented of, as though it had not been, its punishment has been already borne, and so He casts it behind His back, strikes it out of the book of His remembrance. Remember this when your former sins rise up and you are troubled in mind; the King that pardons is He who has Himself paid the penalty.

The second province is that of human sorrow; one that He has traversed Himself in every part, knowing it well and thoroughly. Our King feels with us, and feeling with us would not have us put to one needless pain, and therefore He mitigates our sufferings, partly by the joy His special presence affords, and partly by overruling our sorrows that they may become our greater gain.

What is that suffering which is borne in the very presence of the King, with the assurance that our pain is His pain, and our loss His? Shall we not bear with patience those trials, which come like the hotter blasts of the furnace to purge away the dross which remains so largely in our hearts and natures. They are all directed by the Refiner King, who will not suffer them to be prolonged one unnecessary moment.

And then the third province is that of death. Who is it that fixes the hour and circumstances of our departure hence? He that has the key of death in His pierced hands, “He openeth “and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man “openeth.”

What comfort when we are brought into the presence of death, (either that of our friends, or our own,) to know that the whole issue rests with Him Who has gone through the grave and gate of death; that we are not alone in that mysterious and awful passage, that precious in the sight of our King is the death of His saints, that all is graciously and tenderly arranged, and that He takes the departing spirits to His own sure and safest keeping.

## *THE GLORIFIER OF CHRIST.*

(WHITSUNDAY.)

S. JOHN XVI. 14.

*"He shall glorify Me."*

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THIS is one definition, and perhaps the highest and most exhaustive, of the work of the Blessed Spirit. All the offices He discharges have reference to the Son of God ; all that He does in us is done in connection with that which has been done, is being done, or will be done by the Eternal CHRIST. We cannot dissociate Him from the work of the Second Person ; there is no other way in which He saves us. He leads us in the way of the cross, He moulds us according to the one perfect pattern.

But this work is not only in connection with Christ, it is all for His exaltation and glorification. "He shall glorify Me," He shall make My work to be known and valued, He shall teach men the mystery of My Godhead.

**No. 25**

The work of the Holy Ghost may be spoken of, as what He does for the Church at large, and what he does in the heart of each believer. But each of these is for the glorifying of the Lord. The Church is but His Temple, and the glory of the Temple is the glory of Him whom the Temple enshrines. The believer,—what is he but as some small graft, drawing all his life and all his beauty from the parent stock? The consolations of the Spirit all spring from the work of Christ; the teachings of the Spirit are all teachings in the doctrines of Christ; the pleadings, the prayers, the witness, the earnest of the Spirit, they are all in this direction.

Now the gift of the Holy Spirit is the best and highest gift that God gives His children. It is so described in that familiar passage where the good things which an earthly father gives are contrasted with the gift of God, the gift of the Holy Spirit. Mark this therefore well, God's best gift to us is that which glorifies His Son. The object for which the Holy Ghost is given is to direct us to love and honour that Saviour, and so to glorify Him.

Men sometimes are tempted to speak as though the Gospel was liable to be worn out, as though

its strictness was a passing characteristic, and as though another, a more modern way of salvation, were discovered. The gift of the Spirit is a witness against them. He is given and was given from the earliest ages, and is given still, to enforce and to confirm and to carry out that very same Gospel which our Lord delivered.

And therefore at this solemn season the question comes home very closely how far we are each placing ourselves under the influence of the Spirit, and yielding ourselves up to the accomplishment of the great end for which He was given.

He was given that the Son of God might be glorified. Do I place before myself this object as the object of my life? If I do so it must influence my actions; it will impart a tone, a depth, an earnestness to my life; it will no longer be the empty insipid thing it so often is; I shall have a definite purpose before me, and a standard by which to try my actions. If I am receiving the Holy Spirit, religion will not be a matter the very existence of which is involved in doubt, but it will be a force that is felt, and a power whose working is perceptible.

Here is the question of questions, How can I

glorify the Saviour? Is it by letting it be seen how great is the constraining influence of His mighty love, how much the contemplation of His excellence can influence and transform poor fallen man? Is it by the beauty of holiness which only comes from Him, or is it by efforts made to extend the knowledge of His love and so enlarge the boundaries of His kingdom?

These are questions of very solemn import—not to be hastily answered, but to be carefully considered—and if it should be that you are saying, How can I, with my sad imperfections, my grievous backslidings, my want of firmness of purpose, how can I glorify Him whose name is Wonderful? then remember it is by the Holy Ghost. You can only believe in His Godhead by the Holy Ghost, and you can only work for Him by the Holy Ghost.

Seek, therefore, for this great gift; seek earnestly, and the truth of God's Word and the faithfulness of God's Promise are abundantly pledged that you shall not seek in vain.

## **THE HOLY TRINITY THE OBJECT OF PRAISE.**

(TRINITY.)

REV. IV. 8.

*"Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."*

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PRAISE seems the first and natural duty that is to follow the contemplation of God. Praise is the great duty of Trinity Sunday. We stay not now for definitions, we thankfully accept the dogmas handed down to us by the Church, consecrated by the belief of ages, and founded on the sure warranty of Holy Scripture. Our duty is adoration, to humble ourselves in reverent worship of the Great Triune, Jehovah, our Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier.

And of all forms of worship perhaps this of the text is the highest, for Holiness is the combination in due proportion of all excellence. It is the

**No. 26.**

blending together in one perfect whole all the attributes of His goodness, and therefore the ascription of Holiness is the expression of the highest adoration of which we as creatures are capable.

This Holiness is something far beyond us ; what do we know of it ? The Son of God has brought it partially near to us, the Spirit of God instructs us in it, but its full beauty it is impossible for us to understand. It is a study which none of us has fully mastered ; the most advanced has still room for much further progress ; it is meant to be the study of a lifetime ; the better we are, the more power we have to understand it ; and therefore the more meaning there will be in our ascription of praise, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, "which was, and is, and is to come."

Yea we might go the length of saying that the full knowledge of this Holiness is an attainment that we shall be cultivating throughout the endless ages of eternity. We shall have never mastered it in its inexhaustible fulness. However far advanced, there will be still further discoveries, and higher appreciations to be made. Those now gathered in the waiting-land are still learning, but have not fully learnt it. There will be mar-

vellous revelations made at the Second Coming, but even then we shall still be finite, and the finite will not be able to grasp the infinite.

Add to all this that this holiness which we are called to worship is also a holiness we are called to imitate. The study of God's nature and character is not the study of a simply curious and enquiring spirit ; it is the study of one anxious to obtain the holiness he admires. The holiness of which we speak is a holiness we all need and always shall need for ever and ever, and the way to acquire it is to study all we can of the revelation of God in His Word, in His works and in His ways. The humble contemplation of God, of all He has done, all He is doing, and all He will do for us, is the best and highest education which the spirit of man can receive. It is for this that we are here on this earth, it is for this that we have been made, redeemed, and are being sanctified.

And consequently we may say that holiness is a life of praise. The mere utterance of words is but a very little portion of praise—it is one part, one very essential part, it is a revealed duty—but it is not the highest part. The highest part is the homage of the whole man—the adoration

shewn in the whole tenour of His life, the free-will service of his every power, the consecration of himself and his all, the daily sacrifice, the hourly self-control, the frequent communion with God. Are your lives lives of thankfulness and praise, lives calculated to shew forth that you really believe God to be good, and that His holiness is a thing to be desired and sought after? Then will you be thankful for the calls to commemorate the truths which have been revealed to us, and with ever increasing adoration join in the heavenly anthem, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God "Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

## *A C C E S S.*

(TRINITY.)

EPHESIANS II. 18.

*"Through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."*

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SAINT PAUL is speaking of Christ Jesus. He has described Him as bringing together both Jews and Gentiles, and offering to both alike the salvation of God; and, he adds, through Him—*i.e.*, through Christ—we, both Jews and Gentiles, have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

These words contain in the shortest space the relationship of man to the Great Three in One. The great doctrine of the Trinity does indeed seem to underly the whole of Scripture; so fundamental is it that it is constantly appearing on the surface. It is not so much asserted definitely, as alluded to; not prominently meeting the eye of the cursory reader, but found by the careful student of the Word of God. We have not so

much the bare statement of the dogma. What we have is the way in which the dogma is turned to profitable account.

And the usage of Scripture should be a guide to us. What we want is not so much the definition as the practical bearings of the truth. What is all this to me? how does it concern me? are questions which the anxiously struggling spirit will constantly be asking.

Our text gives one answer. It is through the united action of the Three Persons that we are brought into the presence of God, and find Him a well pleased, loving Father. The doctrine we commemorate to-day, enshrined in the three Creeds of the Church, the precious heritage of God's people underlying the whole of God's revelation to man—is necessary for our access to the Throne of God.

Without Christ there is no access. Man had blocked up the way to God through his own folly and sin, and none but God could open the way again. He opened it by His own sacrifice, by His life, by Himself, and thus He is described as the way of access, and it is through Him that we approach.

But who shall approach; aye, who will care

to approach? Without the life-giving power of God not one. Man having fallen into the sleep of spiritual death cannot rise into the activity of spiritual life of his own accord. It can only be by the agency of another, and that other God—the life-giving Spirit of God—and, consequently, it is through Christ that we have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

And as we think of this there is one thought which will rise up in every heart, the immense preparation made for the salvation of our race. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the Three Persons of the One Godhead, combine for our approach to God, each with an existence far, far above us, yet so undertake our cause as though we were the very highest of creation, and the first objects of the great Creator's care. How important must those things be which are effected only by such a costly preparation—the Father giving the Son, the Son taking human flesh and dying, the Holy Spirit sent and pleading with poor sinners—all that we may have access to the Father.

The question therefore comes home and presses for an answer, Am I seeking the means of access, am I using the privileges of access provided? I do not simply ask you the question, Are you

attending the means of grace, and are you making use of the outward forms of worship ? but I ask you, are you coming into the very presence of God, satisfied with nothing short of finding Him ? I ask you, are you seeking blessings directly, immediately from Him, with no intervening medium ? Our text speaks of no such medium. It takes for granted that we all may come, not merely to God's minister, but to God Himself, and derive all we want direct from His Throne.

Once more I point you to Him. Go with all that is on your mind and on your heart, cast it all, cast yourself, on Him, for He careth for you. He, the Triune Jehovah, in all His majesty and power and strength, He is yours ; you may approach Him freely, the golden sceptre is extended in proof of His approval ; pour out your heart before Him and He will send you the full relief you require.

## *SPEAKING GOOD OF GOD.*

PSALM CIII. 1.

*"Bless the Lord, O, my soul."*

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THERE is a slight difference between the two words, praise and bless. Praise is used in the Prayer-Book version, and bless, with more correctness, in the Bible.

To praise may be defined as to appreciate excellence or to declare excellence.

To bless may be defined as to speak good of, or to wish good to, or to do good to.

You will find in the Prayer-Book version of the last verse of this psalm this word rendered, "Speak good." "O speak good of the Lord!" and it is in that sense that I would now call on you very briefly to meditate on these words, "Bless the Lord, O, my soul."

*No. 28*

The Psalmist indicates that this is the result of gratitude, for he stirs up his own feelings by recounting the good things he has received from God.

Let us take it, then, as a first principle that all who have received mercies from God (and who has not?) ought to speak good of Him, ought so to represent Him and His Kingdom that others may learn to admire His goodness.

And the first step in this work is evidently shewn us here. We must first form definite conceptions of the character of God, and of our relationship to Him. We must be persuaded in our own minds of the goodness of God shewn personally to ourselves, of our own sins pardoned, our own diseases healed, necessaries, and more than necessaries, provided, long-suffering surpassing that of man, a pity greater than any earthly father feels, extended from one generation of men to another, prepared from everlasting, without intermission, exercised universally. That man who has no present sense of how good God has been to him cannot set forth that goodness to others. So that the first thing is to study, and that very attentively, what you have received from God, what the Lord Jesus has done for

you, and what the Holy Spirit of God has patiently and consistently effected.

And then the result of this, the gratitude stirred, will be shewn in speaking good of God.

It is hardly too much to assert that all religion may be summed up in that expression. To speak good of God with any effect you must shew forth that you are penetrated with a sense of that goodness. If you want to shew to others how good God is, you must set to work to shew the effect of that goodness on yourself,—natural infirmities softened and corrected, inconsistencies and blots of character removed, the beauty of holiness conspicuous, and charity in its widest sense that bears with others' faults and supplies with tenderness the wants of the needy.

You may do much by words spoken in season to defend the insulted majesty of God, you may do much by telling others in private what you have yourself found God to be.

But you may do more, much more, by the silent eloquence of a holy life, by the exhibition of the effect of Christian principle, by the cheerfulness of a spirit at peace with God, by the activity of self-sacrifice from one who loves his neighbour as himself, and is doing unto all

men as he would they should do unto him.

There is no exercise so strengthening as this of blessing God, speaking good of His name, of finding marks of His goodness even in the darkest providences. It is well to cultivate the habit, for certainly nothing contributes more to a bright happiness of spirit.

Bless the Lord, O, my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name.

## ***PERSEVERANCE IN PRAYER.***

**S. LUKE XVIII. 1.**

*“And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”*

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“**MEN** ought always to pray.” These are the Lord’s own words, and they are repeated more than once by S. Paul. There is no exaggeration in them, if we take prayer to be the desire of the soul after God and the constant looking to Him for the supply of every want. We are to be men of prayer, our lives are to be lives of prayer—“Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.”

The parable here spoken has chiefly in view those who have the hardest work to do in continuing in prayer, those who have gone on for a long while without any apparent answer. And if even *they* should pray, how much more loudly

**No. 29.**

does the call sound to others who have not their difficulty. Are you men of prayer? Do not your petitions often languish? What have they been this very day? In your private prayers, or your family prayers, or your prayers in the House of God, has the desire of your very heart been poured forth into the ever watchful ear of your listening Father?

There has been with some the deadening effect of the cares of this world; with some it may be the consciousness of an unconfessed sin, with some an unforgiving spirit, with many a preoccupied mind. Love has been dead, and hence silence towards God.

Our prayers may well be taken as a test of our spiritual state, and, therefore, we all need to be constantly reminded of this elementary truth, "that men ought always to pray and not to faint."

But take the case of those who seem to have been more immediately in our Lord's mind when He spake this parable, those who have prayed but have seen no fruit of their labour. They have asked perhaps for the removal of some sore temptation, or for guidance in a great difficulty, or for a blessing to one near and dear, and they

may have gone on asking again and again, and yet no sensible relief has come. They are dispirited and cast down, and they not unnaturally ask the question, of what use is it to go on, the exercise seems fruitless, God will not hear and so it is idle for me to continue in prayer.

Such there are. Few indeed who are serving God but have had some such seasons of discouragement. To all such I say, remember the lesson the Saviour gives, a lesson intended to meet your particular case, "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

He gives an instance in worldly matters of a woman gaining her petition from an unwilling and a godless judge. Again and again she came, and again and again was she dismissed; but she was not to be silenced. Her sense of wrong was strong upon her, and here lay her only hope, "Avenge me of mine adversary." And so she persevered, seizing every opportunity, utilizing every occasion, in season, out of season, until the judge, worn out by her persistency, solely to save himself from the continuance of the annoyance, gave way and granted her what she wanted. Even this woman prevailed.

Mark then the contrast between her case and

yours. You have not an unwilling judge to plead with, but a tender, pitying Father. He is more careful of your good than you are yourself, you are safer in His hands than you are in your own. The judge cared not for the lone and defenceless widow, and yet he yielded to her importunity. The Lord has already heard your cry, though the right time for the answer may not yet have come. "Shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." Go on then in your prayer; you are not to faint, you are to persevere with brave and persistent patience, to use Scripture language, "give Him no rest" until the answer comes.

Turn all seeming refusals into reasons for granting your petitions. Whatever you do, beware of giving up, for "men ought always to pray and not to faint."

The case is very plain and very simple. It admits of no subterfuge and no explanation. If you are not praying you are not doing what men ought always to do, and that cannot be right. Go on in prayer at all hazards, and amidst every discouragement, and under the heaviest tempta-

tion ; God may wait long, but He will not wait for ever—in the sense of withholding His favour—and in the end the blessing shall come, and it shall be all the greater in proportion to the delay, and you shall own that He was right all along, good alike in withholding and good also in sending His blessing.

## *MANY THRONG, FEW TOUCH.*

S. MARK v. 31.

*"And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched Me?"*

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We are all familiar with the scene. Our Lord having just landed had been received with a joyful welcome by the people. Their excitement had been raised by the earnest entreaty of Jairus, that He would come and heal his daughter lying then at her very last gasp. The disciples and the crowd follow, pressing and thronging about the person of the Son of Man, as He passes rapidly towards the chamber of death. There were vague hopes and expectations, and many probably would have found it difficult to have given a reason for their eagerness beyond that of excited curiosity. Amidst it all this poor woman who had an affliction or a complaint which had

No. 30

surpassed the skill of many physicians, believing that a touch of the dress of the Messiah would be enough, edged her way through the press and succeeded in touching the clothes of the Holy One. "And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague."

We notice then that there was something peculiar in that touch. The thronging multitudes as they jostled through the streets were all pressing against the Lord. But this contact with Him produced no alteration either physically or spiritually upon them. But the finger of this sufferer reached Him and she was immediately made whole. *Many thronged—one touched.* The Lord immediately calls special attention to what had happened, "knowing in Himself that virtue had gone out of Him," for He never healed without some suffering to Himself, "turned about in the press and said, Who touched My clothes? And His disciples said unto Him, Thou seest the multitude thronging Thee, and sayest Thou who touched me?"

It is much the same still. Many throng, few touch.

Many throng. They like to hear of Jesus

Christ ; a faithful representation of His truth is always popular ; Christian services are well attended, the Sacrament of the Holy Supper is being increasingly partaken, books of devotion are bought, sacred pictures are prized, devotional music is liked. Yes many throng. They come about the Saviour, they hear His name, they listen to His teaching ; but do they, as this poor woman, touch Him ?

What was it that made the difference in her case ? She came with the consciousness of a precise and definite want, and she pressed towards Christ to get that want supplied. The others had no wants in their minds, they were not seeking to obtain any particular blessing, and so they only thronged.

Of what use, indeed, to be brought nigh unless we are anxious to turn our privileges to account, of what use the large gathering of the congregation Sunday after Sunday, of what use the commemoration of Christ's Body and Blood, unless you have a want in your spirit you are anxious to have supplied. Come as one in need, and you may have the contact through which the supply is granted ; press through the crowd, look not on them, have one grand thought in your mind

one absorbing consideration—how you may reach your Saviour, how come quite close to Him, how you may receive from Him that blessing which can alone give peace and satisfaction to your troubled spirit.

Do you think that this poor woman surveyed in her trouble the persons of which that crowd was composed, that she thought who was there and who was not there, that she considered how they were dressed, or marked any peculiarity in their expression? No, she was engrossed with one thought, it had taken possession of her soul, she was wrapt up and intent on one thing—how she might touch if it were but the hem of her Lord's garment.

Let us try to learn from her how we should seek Christ, and also take encouragement that if like her we seek, like her we shall be sure to find.

Some there are who fancy that they are not noticed in the crowd. They dwell upon the large affairs and stupendous interests which occupy our Blessed Lord, they think how the concerns of worlds on worlds wait His bidding, and in the vast administration they fancy that the individual is passed over. But see here, the Son of Man is on a mission of life and death, the message an-

nouncing the girl's death has reached Him, He is hastening to bring back her departed spirit ; but the woman's touch arrests Him ; He will not allow the occurrence to pass unnoticed. She was already healed in body, but a spiritual healing still remained, and so she is made to come forward against her will, and to receive the words of a parting blessing.

There is not one who may not have an equal attention. Come seeking amongst those who touch, not amongst those who merely throng, and you shall find in Christ what you want, and receive, as did this poor sufferer, an overflowing abundance of spiritual blessing and comfort.

## *THE OBEDIENT FISHERMAN.*

S. LUKE v. 5.

*"Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net."*

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THE experience of Simon Peter is no exceptional one amongst those who follow the fisherman's precarious calling ; and, to say the least, it is as frequently the case of those who follow the calling of which the fisherman's is the lower type. We can easily imagine with what force this miracle would recur to the minds of these Apostles when afterwards, after much labour spent in any one place, but few results of their efforts were apparent ; for it is evident that it was intended by our Lord that this miracle should be so applied. When He told Simon that henceforth he should catch men, it is plain that he

was to apply to the new calling the lessons and the illustrations of the old.

Is not this frequently our own experience, whether our efforts be for bringing others within the Gospel net, or for our individual improvement? What earnest worker for Christ but has had his seasons of depression in consequence of the smallness of the results achieved? "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing."

Have you not found it so when you have set yourselves resolutely to work to overcome some evil habit? You have tried, and you have prayed, and you have watched, but evil has prevailed; you have humbled yourself in God's sight, you have humbled yourself in your own, and sought for strength, and used every means at your disposal, but again and again have you been disappointed. You are inclined to ask, of what use is it all; it is strength spent in vain, labour thrown away—"We have toiled all the night and taken nothing"—and you feel inclined to give up the hopeless task, and to cease from efforts that produce no good result.

Is it so with you? Then to you comes the command of the risen Saviour, it is absolute and

imperative, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your net for a draught." What do you know about results? Do you think you can say any better than could these fishermen? They thought that their want of success during the night was but a poor augury for another result during the day; they were down-hearted and wearied; so are you. But, mark you, Simon obeyed; though as yet he knew but very little of that Holy Being who was speaking, he yet yielded implicit obedience to His order. "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing; nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net."

Now that is exactly what Christ is now expecting from you. He is watching and waiting to see that you comply; His word comes to you; it comes in the midst of your failure—yea, I might even say it comes to you on account of your failure—and it bids you try again. Remember that effort is in your power, but not result; you can command effort though you cannot command success; and, as you make the effort, keep ever in mind that you are making it at the word of your Saviour, that it is His wish, that it is His command.

And this will enable you to follow Simon Peter in one other particular. During the fruitless toil the Lord was not with him ; but now he had received Him into the ship, and had Him there during this fishing venture.

So you, if you will make one fresh endeavour at the word of Christ, and keep in mind that it is at His word, then we may be quite sure that you will be working in His presence ; He will be with you, and who works in vain in His company ? It is He who commands success, it is He who gives success. “He shall not fail, nor be discouraged ;” and He will neither fail Himself nor suffer any of His own to fail in obtaining complete success and perfect victory in the end.

## **THE SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE.**

2 COR. XII. 9.

*"My grace is sufficient for thee."*

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THIS was the answer given to a tried and suffering Apostle. He was tried by some humbling affliction, which he himself calls a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan buffeting him. There have been various conjectures as to the precise character of this affliction, but we need not enquire into them; it is enough for our purpose to notice that, whatever their character the words of our text are equally applicable, the character of the affliction does not alter the fulness of the Lord's assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee." Or to go still further, the assertion of the text applies not only to S. Paul in his trials, but to each and every Christian in all the manifold afflictions that try

and press down his spirit. The principle, the foundation principle, of this declaration has nothing to make it more applicable to an Apostle than to the weakest of the followers of Christ. Even an Apostle was nothing without this grace, and with this grace he might be content to endure the buffeting of the Evil one.

The assurance here given is of such importance, and is contained in such brief compass, that every word in it is emphatic.

*My grace*; it is Mine. The speaker is Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Lord to whom S. Paul had been directing prayer; and when He says, “*My grace*”, He means that with which we are acquainted and which we associate with His Gospel revelation, His purchased blessing, His coveted strength, given through the Holy Ghost to the souls of His people.

“*My grace*” therefore refers us to the Gospel blessings given in the way which Christ has indicated. He may choose to depart from that way, and to give it by other channels; but we have no right to expect it by anything different from that which He has told us, those which we familiarly call the means, the appointed means of grace.

“*My grace*,” that is, My free sovereign gift, that which I give, not that which you deserve. S. Paul had lately been carried into the third heavens, and experienced there what he could not communicate to others ; but that constituted no ground for deserving the gifts of Christ, that privilege did not prevent the approach of Satan’s messenger immediately the time of privilege was past—nay, it does not seem to have afforded him the strength he needed when the day of trial came.

What we want is not what we have gained or earned—it is not the position we have reached by the help of God—it is the gift, the free gift, which the Lord makes, makes from day to day to those who are seeking His grace.

The term further implies that the gift partakes the character of the Giver. “*My grace*.” It is that which speaks of Me, and brings Me present to My tried servant. It is that Presence which helps us and cheers us, that Presence we desire now, and that Presence which will satisfy us hereafter.

This leads us to the next point, “*My grace is sufficient*.” It is supplied from day to day, according to the day’s requirement. The grace

for any emergency is not given before the emergency, it is given when the emergency arrives. A martyr's strength is given when a martyr's strength is required. Many are depressed because they have not now, or because they think they have not now, that firm faith which alone can support them in the hour of death ; but remember that is not the sort of grace required now, you want grace for life, not grace for death. You know how you are directed to pray that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need, for then the promise runs, and we must not exceed the promise in our prayers—“As thy “days, so shall thy strength be.”

“ My grace is sufficient,” sufficient for safety, though, perhaps, not sufficient for enjoyment ; enough, but not more than enough ; enough for you to do your duty and to fulfil your requirements, enough that you may be faithful to the promise you have made of service to your God and Saviour.

Once more, “ My grace is sufficient for *thee*.” The words were spoken to S. Paul ; and, as we have noticed, they are spoken to each Christian in his separate individuality, for the gift of Christ is given freely and without condition to every

one who earnestly seeks Him ; and, if given, His honour is concerned that enough for this purpose should be given. We have our different capacities, and those capacities vary from time to time. The Lord gives to each of us, and we receive according to our several capacity ; we are tried according to that capacity, the All-seeing One knowing full well what it is.

I may therefore say to each one who is seeking to serve God, the grace of Christ which He is giving you is enough for you ; whatever your calling and circumstances He will always give you enough to carry you safe through. I do not know your circumstances, I cannot gauge your capacity for reception, but this I do know, and this I am warranted in declaring, for the principle is true and will bear a universal application—that the Son of God declares, “ My strength is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.”

## *SINS OF IGNORANCE.*

PSALM XIX. 12.

*"Who can understand his errors? cleanse Thou me from secret faults."*

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SECRET faults. These are evidently faults secret from himself, the faults the psalmist did not know. Nothing I think gives us so terrible a view of sin as such a passage as this. We generally confine our notions of sin to transgressions and omissions of which we and others are conscious—definite, specific acts, which can be described and specified; but this prayer of David's shews us that sin is much more complex, subtle, and deceitful. "Who can understand "his errors?" No one who has not a thorough acquaintance with the whole character and mind of GOD. For sin enters into the whole being, it

*No. 33.*

infects thought, and temper, and disposition, it cleaves to our holiest actions, we sin in our devotion, we sin in our charities, we sin even when struggling with sin. Who can understand his errors? Cleanse Thou me from those I have never noticed, all the guilt I have in my ignorance contracted. Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.

We understand sin only within the limit of our knowledge, even conscience can only bear its witness according to the light we have received. If conscience bears no witness against us, we may commit sin without knowing it to be sin, and perhaps think it is right all the time.

Let us remember that sins of ignorance are sins. God looks on them as sin, and we require cleansing from sins of ignorance no less than from sins of knowledge. In the law of Moses there was special provision made for them. There was an offering to be made in atonement for those sins which men had done in their ignorance and did not know to be sin. We are told that there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death, that there is a generation that are pure in their own eyes and yet are not washed from their filthiness. And the Saviour Himself has told us that the

servant, who knows not his Master's will and does it not, shall be beaten, though with few stripes.

Therefore, when we have done all we can to find out our sins, when we have searched, using every help we have, let us remember that there is, over and beyond all our discoveries, an amount of guilt we can never fathom, and that this, no less than all the rest, requires the cleansing of the Blood of Christ; and that, while we are asking for the pardon of all our known sins, we should ask also for the pardon of the unknown; "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults."

Yes, and the further we advance in spiritual knowledge the more profoundly shall we be convinced of the extent of our ignorance, and therefore of the imperative necessity for seeking pardon for those sins which we ignorantly have committed. Often when you have acted with the best intention you have failed to act wisely; often, through want of vigilance, you have inadvertently done wrong; often you have forgotten what you have done,—and for all that you need this prayer.

And then you know for your great comfort, there is the cleansing all ready for you; you

serve a loving, gracious God who will not be extreme to mark what has been done amiss, and ever as the prayer goes up, the answer is ever ready to come, "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him."

## **GOD'S FAITHFULNESS.**

**1 THESS. v. 24.**

*"Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."*

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THIS verse has reference to that which has immediately gone before : to the prayer that the God of peace would sanctify the Thessalonians and preserve them entire until the coming of Christ. The prayer is most comprehensive, so large indeed in its scope that many might be inclined to think the Apostle was asking for too high a favour. Was it possible that they, so inconsistent, so ignorant, so weak, could be wholly sanctified, and that every part, body, soul, and spirit, could be preserved in its full entirety, with no blot or flaw, so that nothing further could be desired in them, unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ? Was not this praying for an im-

possibility? It was to check any such thought that these words are added: "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

This reason is an abiding one, and therefore the comfort that is based upon it is abiding also. Our Caller is true to Himself, true to His character, true to His word. We need not fear that the work He has undertaken will be abandoned, unless we wilfully abandon Him. What is the object of His calling us; for what has the whole apparatus of appliances for our spiritual education been set in motion: if it be not for this great end, that we may be brought into a state of perfect holiness, a holiness affecting every part, and developed to the highest of all possible stages. This is our calling: and our Caller is faithful to His promise, He will do it and accomplish it all.

We are to throw ourselves upon that faithfulness, and to work with it for the end placed before us; never resting satisfied with the present, but always pressing on to something higher. You will notice in this chapter that this encouragement, based on God's faithfulness, follows closely upon commands for personal exertion; such as "Pray without ceasing," "Quench not

the Spirit," "Abstain from all appearance of evil," and so forth. Do these, and in the faithful doing of them take the comfort that God will hear your prayer for a progressive and perfect holiness.

Now one reason, so it seems to me, that we do not more fully and completely attain to this higher holiness, is, that we are not seeking to turn to advantage all the occurrences of life. Every one of them is intended to help us; and not only the sad events of life, as men sometimes seem to think. Is it not when you hear of calamity overtaking men that you say, and say rightly, what a call to own God's hand! what a season for repentance and humiliation, and amendment! But when it is some great mercy, some unexpected blessing, such a thought does not spontaneously rise in your minds. And yet it ought to surely. Does God always speak in affliction, does He not as clearly and as frequently speak in mercy? Shall we listen only to tones of severity—can we only be reached by punishment? Oh turn at the loving kindnesses of God, let each fresh mercy draw out your heart to Him, let each token of His love humble you whilst it kindles you to a new devotion and makes you

know that the Apostle was right in adding to his comprehensive prayer this encouraging thought, "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

*RESULT NOT IN PROPORTION TO  
MEANS.*

S. JOHN VL 9.

*"But what are they among so many?"*

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WHAT indeed? Five loaves and two fishes among five thousand men. Utterly inadequate according to human calculation, utterly inadequate without the interposition of Divine Power, and yet in the hands of the Saviour more than sufficient for the occasion.

It is the same with all God's interpositions. The means He uses seem to our shortsighted vision incommensurate with the result to be gained. What is Gideon's small band of three hundred against the hosts of Midian? What, the stripling David with his shepherd's sling against the giant Goliath and his powerful armour? What, this small nation of Israel to

be the depository of the faith, amidst the world-wide empires which succeeded one another? What, the little band of disciples gathered round their Lord, few in number and destitute of this world's teaching, as the agents for overthrowing the false philosophies of the day? What are these among so many?

Would not God indeed have us learn from this to trust to Him? Would He not have us know that we are not to judge of results, according to human judgment, in comparison with the outward means employed: but that we are to remember also the unseen working of the Holy Spirit, which makes the means so powerful for the work that has to be done?

Think of the work in our own souls. How tremendous it is. The forming the new nature of holiness, the withstanding the attacks of super-human foes, the maintaining a consistent walk amidst unseen dangers. And the means employed, how utterly inadequate they seem, laughed at, scorned by men in general. What are they? What this spiritual sustenance for the supply of one, what for the supply of the whole Body?

And yet how successful are the means. Prayer offered to the Unseen, study of the Sacred

Books, worship of the Crucified, partaking of the Holy Feast. Through God they are enough to maintain and develope the life of faith.

Think of the work of evangelising our fellow creatures. When we consider the power of habit, the force of evil associations around, the mighty temptations that prevail, the very little influence we can bring to bear, we are inclined to repeat the question, What is this among so many? And yet the few words of warning dropped, the passage of God's Word read, the friendly counsel, the kindly sympathy in trouble, insults meekly and patiently borne, persistency of effort, how widely are these blessed. Here one and there another is gained to the side of Truth, and each one so gained is a centre of Christian influence, spreading the leaven of the kingdom through the surrounding mass.

Therefore we are not to be discouraged ; we are not to despise the day of small things ; we are not to neglect the appointed means, because they appear to us so utterly inadequate for the object. Whether we have regard to the work in our own hearts, or in the hearts of others, be bold in using the means: give what you can, even though it seem utterly insignificant. The lad's slender

store shall with Christ's blessing avail for His purposes. God's strength shall be perfected in our weakness. God's power shall be magnified through the disproportion of the means to the end accomplished. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit saith the Lord of Hosts."

## *CHRIST RECEIVING SINNERS.*

S. LUKE xv. 2.

*"This Man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them."*

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THIS taunt was drawn forth by the sight of the publicans and sinners flocking to our Lord's teaching, not by the sight of his sitting down to eat with them. It was intended to convey the impression that He liked the society of bad characters, and that He sought them out as His acquaintances.

And how does the Lord meet it? He meets it by the three marvellous parables of this chapter, in which He lays down with full loving richness of tenderness His true relation to sinners.

He had come to save sinners, but how could He save them unless He had personal contact with them? We are indeed so familiar with the expression to save sinners, and with the truth that

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the term sinners includes all mankind, that we too often forget that our Lord came indeed to save those whom we ourselves look on as sinners. All sinners, real sinners, those who have sunk into the lowest defilements of sin,—to these His words often pointed, in these they often found a lodgement, and enkindled hope, attracting them with a strange and peculiar force.

In these first two parables the Saviour points to the individual discriminating care which each one of His erring children receives. The ninety-nine sheep are left, whilst the one straying sheep is sought. The nine pieces are not thought of, whilst the woman's whole energies are concentrated on the one she has lost.

Each one of us has received the same individualising care. The attention bestowed has been so great that we might well imagine there never was one so tenderly watched. Whether like the sheep or the prodigal you have strayed through your own folly, or like the piece of money you have been lost through the neglect of others; the result has been the same, you have been sought out, and plied with all the arguments of a Saviour's love. In the wilderness of your sin and sorrow, in the strong places of rebellion, in

the deep places of despair, the voice of Jesus has found you out. He has spoken to you in the overwhelmings of affliction ; He has spoken to you in the surprises of unexpected mercies ; He has told you that He came from Heaven for your salvation, that it was for you He suffered, and you whom He is now seeking out to save.

Other things have been tried and they have failed. All others have given you up—but Christ has not done so. You may have wandered from Him again and again ; but again and again has He sought, and again and again has He found.

Yes, and there is something more, something far more precious still in these parables. It is the joy that is present to His heart, and not to His only, but to all hearts that are in unison with His, when the lost is found, and brought safe home once more.

What a view does this give us of His graciousness towards us, and how does it magnify the value of each separate spirit. The conversion of one sinner to God is a subject not beneath the notice of the inhabitants of heaven. There is joy amongst the pure and holy Angels when the news is circulated amongst them that one sinner has repented, that one lost one is found.

**A**nd in that joy the Lord of Angels partakes. As the shepherd rejoiced over the sheep, as the woman rejoiced over the coin, and as the father rejoiced over his son, so does the Saviour rejoice over each whom He saves.

It is to this loving Saviour that you are once more invited to approach. If you come with simplicity and earnestness of heart, we may be sure that He is pleased with the coming, the coming of each, that He knows you through and through, that He is prepared to give you the supply that is best for you, to lead you on your journey home, to help you over the difficulties, to guide you through the difficulties, and, the difficulties past, to welcome you with untold joy into the place He is preparing for you in the Father's House.

## *RECOLLECTION A PRESERVATIVE FROM DESPAIR.*

PSALM LXXXVII. 10.

*"And I said this is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High."*

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THERE are I suppose few of those, who have had any spiritual consciousness at all, have not at some period or other had an experience similar to that which the Psalmist here records of himself. They have had their times when God's face seemed turned away; when they had no evidence of His presence, when they have thought themselves altogether abandoned. They have in inward agony asked the question, "Will the Lord cast me off for ever? Will He be favourable no more? Is His mercy clean gone for ever? Doth His promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath He in anger shut up His tender mercies?"

No. 37.

Such a state is a very painful one—it may be a very protracted one. And the oppressed spirit casts about in deep anxiety for a solution of the doubt. Where is the fault? How is an escape possible? Our text suggests the answer. The fault is ours, “And I said this is my infirmity,” or rather my sickness, or my affliction. The remedy therefore is not to be found by looking at myself, by analyzing my feelings, by ever testing my motives, and so forth. No I must go out of myself; I must go to something more sure than my unstable frames and feelings. I must go to the great unchanging God, “I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.”

It may comfort some to know that such spiritual suffering as they are undergoing is the evil of their disease, rather than the evil of their sin; that it proceeds frequently from bodily weakness, from physical disease, as in the case of the Psalmist or in the case of Hezekiah. But whatever the cause, the remedy is to be found in remembering the goodness of the Everlasting, the years of the right hand of the Most High, the good things He has done in the past, the works of the Lord and His wonders of old.

Are any of you now in spiritual distress?

Look off from yourselves, and look at the great things God has done for you from the very beginning. It was for you that all the beauties of the first Creation were made ; for you the Son of God was sent for the perfection of the second Creation ; for you the Holy Spirit comes and pleads with constant urgency. It is of God's goodness to you that you have been preserved to this day, and that you are now among the living to praise Him. It is of God's goodness to you that you have been brought under the covenant of the Gospel and been received as a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. Every good thought you have ever had—every happy hour of religious privilege you have ever enjoyed—every Christian friendship, every holy aspiration, are all so many proofs of God's individual care and love for you.

Dwell on these things, count and re-count them all. Each fresh remembrance of the goodness of the past is an additional proof that the Everlasting I AM will not cast you off now. It was not in consequence of your goodness that you received good at first, and so you may humbly hope that God will not desert one whom He

has chosen, that He will not forsake the work of His own hands, that He will be faithful and true, abiding the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

And this is one use of the Holy Communion. It leads us out of ourselves to the Great Pledge of God's Love. It takes us out of our passing feelings, and fixes us on the immovable basis of the Rock of Ages. In the memorials of the death of Christ, in the signs of the everlasting Covenant, we may distinctly hear the voice which says, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Here at all events He is present with us. Here we may find Him,—find Him in His unvarying character and His unchanging relationship.

Be assured of His Love, and then sadness and sighing must flee away.

## *CONFESSiON OF CHRIST.*

S. MATT. x. 32.

*"Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in heaven."*

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THERE is much in these words to throw light upon the character of Christians and Christianity. We get to fancy that religion is a matter entirely between our own souls and God ; that it is the concern of no one else besides ; that we should keep it to ourselves and that no one is affected by us in the matter. But our Great Teacher lays it down as a fundamental principle, that each one of His followers is to make a confession of Him before men.

It is something that that confession should be made before the congregation, that each newly admitted one should publicly with his own hand

sign the covenant, and declare his intention with the help of God of living in the covenant of the Church and in the faith and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is something more than that confession should be often repeated as Christ's people meet from week to week to worship Him, and to strengthen each other's faith. This confession of Christ before the Church witnesses to our duty as members of one holy fellowship. It bids us remember that we either help on or else retard the progress of the Kingdom of God on earth.

But yet our text is not, whosoever shall confess Me before the Church, but before men, men generally, believers and non-believers. Our religious life is not to be concealed so that no man shall know it. It is to be a plainly admitted fact; not paraded for the sake of show, not boasted of and talked about, as the Pharisees of old flaunted their superior sanctity before the eyes of men; but meekly, knowing our inconsistencies, weakness, and shortcomings; humbly, knowing that whatever we have, we have received, and that it is not of ourselves. But at the same time there is to be no doubt on whose side we are in the great conflict. Our light is to shine so

that there shall be no uncertainty on the matter. If we are indeed under the influence of God's love and endeavouring really to live to His glory, how can it be otherwise? When we are told to take religion and religious principle into the details of common life, we are sure it must be so. If we have a hidden life with God, there will be the results in the outer life on earth; our actions will speak for themselves, and without selfconsciousness on our parts, men will recognise the fact that we have a hidden supply of strength.

I know of no surer test of conduct than this given here. What is the testimony of our life? A Christian professes not to live for himself. What is the testimony of your life—how does some sudden lapse, some cherished sin, some infirmity of temper or of purpose, mar it? On which side will the sum total, the general impression of the whole, lie? What is the confession in your own family, where you are known best and seen in unguarded moments? What is your confession before the saints of God, in whose company it is your privilege to mingle? What is your confession before the world, the world so quick in detecting the hypocrisy and unmasking the deceit of professing Christians?

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There are difficulties it is true, and we must not treat them as light ones, temptations most seductive, which make this work of confession anything but an easy matter. But on the other hand the promise here linked with the performance is one that should cheer and encourage us on. Fear not to own yourself a servant of Christ, and He will not shrink from owning you as one of His amidst all the grandeur of Heaven, in the Presence of the Everlasting Father. For He Himself has said "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him will I confess before My Father which is in heaven."

## **THE DWELLING PLACE.**

**PSALM XC. 1.**

*"Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations."*

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THIS Psalm has as its title, "A Prayer of Moses, the man of GOD," and the titles of the Psalms are not to be lightly disregarded. The arguments against the Mosaic authorship of this Psalm are by no means weighty. Indeed there is a peculiar significance in the words of the text having been the utterance of Moses. Eighty years of his life were spent in the wilderness, forty years wandering as a shepherd to find a scanty pasture for the sheep of his father-in-law, forty years wandering as the leader of Israel, awaiting the promised entrance into Canaan. For all these years Moses had no settled habitation. The latter half his life was one long succession of trials, and yet Moses could say, "Lord,

Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." Dwelling place, the word signifies abiding, permanent home. The trials and the changes of the world which he saw, made Moses enter with keener appreciation into the privileges and the realities of the unseen by which he was surrounded. He uses the same word (though it has been differently rendered in our translation) in Deut. xxxiii. 27, "The eternal God is thy dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms." All the ideas then that we connect with home, all the quietness, all the happy occupation, its communion, its peace, its security, its identity of interests ; all this the believer finds in God. All these ideas intensified and magnified are associated with Jehovah. He is our dwelling place, surrounding us and protecting us ; an abiding home in all generations, remaining the great Unchangeable, where all others change and shift their position. Thought has undergone marvellous vicissitudes : man has passed through varied changes of physical, intellectual, and even spiritual existence. But amidst them all this grand old Truth has remained unchallenged. Jehovah has been His people's dwelling place in all generations, and now, after some eighteen centuries

of the Christian dispensation, the same blessed truth is proclaimed. The coming of the Son of God has not changed it, it has only brought it out into fuller light. The Personal God which the Gospel proclaims, and who has proclaimed the Gospel, is the dwelling place of those who put their trust in Him.

The phraseology of the New Testament abounds with expressions which speak of Christians being in Christ, being in God, and being in the Spirit. It is for us to use our high privileges. We are baptized into the Holy Name of God, and in God it is our high privilege to dwell. At every moment, in all lawful business, in all lawful pleasure, in society, and in the privacy of retirement, you may dwell in God. Troubles come, losses, grievous heavy losses, fond hopes are disappointed, temptations arise, you are tried to the very uttermost of your strength, and perhaps a little more than you think your uttermost, but God is your dwelling place—stronger than all the strong ones.

Notice how the next Psalm takes up the idea and works it out. There we have the believer appropriating this truth and turning it to account. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the

Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." Then follow a list of blessings included in the terms. At the ninth verse there comes the answer. "Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling."

Therefore it becomes our wisdom to see how far we are turning this glorious truth to account ; making use of this dwelling place, strengthening ourselves in God, living in the consciousness that we are shielded on every side, and that we shall not be cast out of our home, unless we deliberately cast ourselves out.

Use this thought in all times of prosperity, that your prosperity may be sanctified and blessed —in all times of adversity, that you may receive strength to endure—in all times of action, that you may be encouraged with all happy confidence —and in all times of enforced idleness, that you may not look upon yourself as a useless member of the Family of God.

## **THE MEN OF NAZARETH.**

S. MATT. XIII. 58.

*“And He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.”*

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MARK that word *many*. It is not said He did no mighty work ; but He did not *many* mighty works. He did some ; He performed some miraculous cures as we read in S. Mark's account, which indeed is stronger and more precise than that of our text. “He could there do no mighty work, save that He laid His hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And He marvelled because of their unbelief.”

We gather from the context that He was now amongst those who knew Him best. They were men who claimed personal acquaintance with

His kinsmen ; men who had more opportunities than others had of seeing and watching Him. It was the unbelief of these men which caused the holy Saviour to marvel ; the unbelief of these men prevented His performing many miracles before their eyes.

And is it not the same now ? Is it not more marvellous to witness the inconsistency and the worldliness of those who have the first of Christian privileges, than to see the degradation of those who never heard the name of Christ : we are in the position of those who have received much, are we trusting and loving much ? Think of your privileges, and contrast those privileges with your attainments. How is it now, as the Son of God looks down on us living in the full blaze of Gospel light, enjoying the ministry of His Word and Sacraments, and yet oh such little faith, so much unbelief. We complain that He does not reveal Himself more plainly ; but the fault does not lie with Him, but with us. It is not that His revelation is partial, but that our unbelief is blinding.

Well then might He say, “ Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” He gave them doctrine, He gave them sufficient proof, but they attended not. And what was the consequence ; they be-

came case-hardened ; their darkness gathered still greater blackness, and even the Son of God could give them no further manifestation of His power.

Well then may we ask you to make a surrender to Him of your heart, lest the very frequency of His ordinances may have a hardening effect upon your soul. Let not His Gospel be to you a savour of death. Once more He stands in our midst, once more He speaks to you, once more He invites yon to His Presence,—the same loving Saviour that spake gracious words to the men of Galilee. You profess to believe their truth. All He asks is that you should really receive them and act upon them. Come to Him Himself with your sins and your sadness and your weakness, and then He will shew you more of the mystery of His love, and He will do mighty works in you and around you which shall celebrate His power, and you shall be led on and on to know Him more and to grow more like Him, and to have more frequent intercourse with Him.

Do not think that He is to come down to convince you against your will ; do not make the mistake which Dives made when he asked for an unusual portent to be sent to his surviving re-

latives. Make use of the little you have and more will be granted; turn present privileges to account, and God will give you more grace.

Prove yourself faithful in a little, and a larger trust will be committed to your keeping.

## ***PREPARING FOR WORSHIP.***

### **PSALM XXVI. 6. PRAYER BOOK.**

*"I will wash my hands in innocency, O Lord, and so will I go to Thine Altar."*

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THERE is but little difference between this and the Bible version—"so will I compass Thine altar, O LORD." Each alike contains the Psalmist's conviction that those who approach God in public worship must approach Him in innocency. And by innocency here I conceive that we must understand integrity of purpose, putting away from us all desire for what is wrong, and giving ourselves to all that we know is good.

It does not mean that the worshipper has never sinned; it does not mean that the worshipper is perfect; but it does mean that he is sorry for his faults, that he trusts to God's promised pardon; and that from his inmost soul he renounces and gives up all sin whether open or secret. "I will

wash mine hands in innocency, O Lord, and so will I go to Thine altar."

This points to the same truth as is expressed in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, " Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."

You know too well how you have gone to God's House and received no blessing ; how prayer has been restrained, and how praise seemed too heavy to rise ; you have gone through the routine of worship and have had none of the spirit of worship. Now I will not say that this is the only cause, but it is a frequent cause, that you are not putting away from yourself every known sin. You are regarding iniquity in your heart, and so the Lord will not hear your prayer. It may be that you are cherishing unkind thoughts towards some relative or acquaintance ; you may have just cause of complaint, or at all events fancy that you have, and so you harbour an unforgiving spirit. It is this unforgiving spirit which prevents your praying rightly—" If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

. And yet all the while you may be the offender ; the cause of complaint, to say the least, is as much against you as against him. What then says the Saviour ? " If thou bring thy gift to the altar and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

Is it your case that you have wronged another, then go at once and make amends. Is it your case that you are not living in charity with your household or your neighbours, then go at once and put matters right. Until you have done this there is a weight upon your conscience, there is a burden on your spirit, and you cannot soar upon the wings of faith, you cannot worship God with acceptance.

I might say exactly the same of every sin, of every deception, of every questionable practice. Renounce it before you approach God, in order that you may gain that liberty in devotion which your inward spirit craves. " I will wash mine hands in innocency, O Lord, and so will I go to thine altar."

But there is a further truth implied in this ex-

pression which would give to the word “innocency” a meaning further than that of integrity of purpose. The metaphor of washing here, and that of sprinkling already referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews, leads us to think of other acts besides those of confession to man, and restitution, and reconciliation. It refers us to purification in the sight of God. Purification through the Blood of the only Begotten Son, applied personally to the soul of the sinner. A purification sought in earnest prayer, with much sorrow and repentance, and applied by a faith which rests on the eternal promise of the Faithful One.

That alone can wash away the sin ; that alone can assure your heart that the sin is put away ; and that alone can prepare you to be a worshipper in God’s Temple, and to offer the acceptable sacrifice of prayer and praise.

We are now about once more to celebrate the sacrifice of the Atoning Lamb of God, and all are invited to come to the celebration. But mark the qualification that the Church has wisely added : “ Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your sins, and are in love and charity with your neighbours, and intend to lead a new life, following the commandments of God, and walking

from henceforth in His holy ways." Such are invited to draw near with faith, and to take the Holy Sacrament to their comfort. I do not ask you to come with sin upon your conscience ; I do not ask you to come in the heartlessness of a worldly life ; but I do ask you to purge your conscience and to reform your life, to wash your hands in innocency, that so you may go to God's altar. Make the trial, and you will find a lightness of heart and a freshness of spirit that will make the service something very different from anything you have before experienced. You will be able to perceive more of the great love of God, and the freedom and joy of his service. " My foot standeth right, I will praise the Lord in the congregations."

## *COURAGE LEADING TO STRENGTH.*

### **PSALM XXXI. 24**

*"Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."*

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THIS verse as we have it in the Prayer Book version is "Be strong, and He shall establish your heart all ye that put your trust in the Lord."

Comparing the two versions together, we learn that the command to be strong and to be of good courage is the same. And therefore we further learn that the way to be strong is to feel strong, and that if we will but feel strong, greater strength will be given, "He shall strengthen your heart."

Our text therefore puts a high standard before us, and shews us how to reach it. We need a high standard. We are often consenting to a low one. We think it enough to be as those

around us are—that is the standard of men, the standard of weakness and low attainment, the standard of contracted views and imperfect holiness and very small usefulness. It is not the standard of Christ. His is nothing short of perfection, His Father's holiness.

Let us measure our ideas of duty in the balances of the sanctuary. It is to no sickly sentimentalism, to no dreamy unrealities that we are called. Although the weakest is invited, although no weary applicant is refused admission into the Covenant of the Gospel ; yet all who put their trust, all that hope in the Lord are to cast their weakness and their weariness aside, and to be of good courage and be strong.

And this command is not one that is impossible to obey. Strengthen yourselves and you shall receive strength.

But how are we to strengthen ourselves? David we read when in sorest straits encouraged himself in the Lord. Strengthen yourself by a recollection of all your blessings, both blessings promised and blessings received. Strengthen yourself by dwelling on the freeness of all God's offers, His sovereign unbought love, His readiness to receive all that come, the com-

pleteness of the Atonement, and the seal stamped on the Atonement by the Resurrection of Christ.

Strengthen yourself by remembering the victory of our Head, and the assured victory of His members, by all the promises made to the combatants, and by the consciousness that He who is on our side is stronger than all the hosts that are arrayed against us on the other.

Such thoughts give confidence, and confidence is strength.

Is not this the great end and object of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, to give confidence by communion with Him and feeding on all the spiritual sustenance He has provided in Himself?

Is there one discouraged by the magnitude and the number of his sins? Then learn as you meditate on the death of Christ, how infinite has been the expiation for them all. Are you discouraged by your repeated failures? Then think as you receive Christ that you are receiving the strength of Omnipotence. Are you discouraged by the chilling atmosphere of those amongst whom you live? Then come into the region which is sunned by the radiance of the All Holy. Come as you have often come before. It is the old

story of the Cross which has gladdened poor sinners from century to century. The virtue of that Cross is as strong now as when it stood at Calvary. The way to strength and victory remains just the same for us at it was in Apostolic times.

Let us not be cast down by difficulties, but brace ourselves up to meet them. A strong courageous heart trusting in God is more than half the battle. Come and strengthen yourself in Him who is strength itself. "Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord."

## ***CONSCIOUS INTEGRITY.***

**PSALM XVII. 2.**

*"Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence."*

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Do you give that intelligent attention to the Psalms in the service, which they justly demand? Do you attempt to take them in their connection and to draw from them lessons for your own use and edification? We have heard this Psalm. What is its general purport? what its great lesson for us? It is the prayer of the righteous man, the prayer being grounded on the plea of his righteousness. The Psalm before was the prayer of the righteous man, grounded on his faith in Christ, this on his holiness of life. Accordingly, the first five verses are assertions of his own integrity—an appeal to the right, to the sincerity of his worship, to the trial he has stood, and to the

consistency between his profession and his practice. In our text he boldly challenges God's decision upon his integrity—"Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence." These are considerations not to be lost sight of. We cannot expect answers to prayer unless, at all events, we are sincere in our desires to serve God. We cannot expect that our prayers will meet with acceptance unless they are the utterances of a seeking heart. Has not our Lord told us that we cannot expect forgiveness, yea that we shall not receive forgiveness, unless we ourselves forgive? It is an axiom of eternal truth, "If "I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." So that we ought not to shrink from the conviction that we are in earnest, and pleading the truth of that conviction, when we approach the House of God. "Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence." Such is the cry of one who knows that he is endeavouring to serve God. But it is not meant to imply that he is perfect, it is not meant to imply that he has walked straight without wandering, or that he expects to be able to do so for the future. In proof of this, we have only to read the Psalm, and see how David throws himself upon God for

preservation and protection. "Hold up my goings in Thy path, that my footsteps slip not." "Keep me as the apple of Thine eye, hide me under the shadow of Thy wings." And yet, notwithstanding this, he could be conscious of integrity of purpose, and honesty of desire, and say, "Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence" "*From Thy presence*"—from the seat of justice and the throne of equity; from the mercy seat of God, where the great Advocate ever pleads for His children; from the hidden, inner secret place, over which the veil is at present drawn, where all is sinless, pure, and holy; from that Presence where the book of remembrance is kept, and desires no less than performances are registered. In order that we may use these solemn words, what care must we take that we put away from us all sins which we know to be sins; that we contend with the evil tendencies of our heart, and that we guard with careful jealousy our motive, and our spirit. We are about to come into that Presence, though it is unseen by the bodily sight. Are we coming with that simplicity of purpose that we can appeal to the Searcher of hearts to endorse our sincerity and honesty? If not, how can we

venture to draw nigh at all? If you cannot say, I am really desiring to find my Saviour, and to be strengthened and refreshed by feeding on Him, why should you come at all? Your act has no meaning unless it is *bond fide*. If it is so, why should you shrink from owning or using the plea as the psalmist used it in his hour of need. "Let my sentence come forth from Thy presence, and let Thine eye look upon the thing that is equal."

## **THE SPIRITUAL SENSE.**

**1 JOHN IV. 12.**

*"No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us."*

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THESE words contain a profound mystery. The Apostle has spoken of what God has done for us, and the way in which He has shown his love to us. But he says, "No man hath seen God at any time." The Second Person of the Godhead has been seen, but not the Great Triune. We have seen the works of God, but we have not seen God Himself. No flesh can see Him and live. Is it then so that we cannot be aware of the existence, or even the presence of God? Oh no, by no means. There are other senses than those of the body, other means of perception than those by which we take cognisance of material things.

We have not seen, we cannot see God; yet we

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may go to God and have intercourse direct and immediate. Our ears have never heard, and cannot at present hear, the sound of His voice; but we may learn the messages He sends us, and we may be instructed in His mind and will.

But this possibility depends upon our own spirit, so to speak, upon the moral atmosphere in which we surround ourselves. And therefore the Apostle proceeds, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." And therefore it is, that when anyone complains that he is not finding religion a reality, that he is not sensible of its vital and constraining power, that it appears visionary, dreaming, and fantastic, then this is one of the first questions that we would ask him : Are you living in love, loving your brethren, carrying out the principles of love, obeying the dictates of love? All harshness, all selfish coldness, all hatred of one another, cloud the spiritual perception, and prevent our seeing as we should wish to see the realities of God and the mysteries of faith.

Apply this test to yourselves. How is it with you now? Are you living in perfect love with all men? Is there no harbouring of malice and

revenge? No cherishing unkind feeling, and perhaps a pride in doing so? Have you forgiven freely, and from the bottom of your heart, all the offences of every kind that everyone has committed against you? Have you so pardoned others as you hope that God for Christ's sake will pardon you?

How many there are who are kept back from the enjoyment of religion because they have not a forgiving spirit. They are highly respectable and honourable; they are conscientious, they attend to their religious duties, but they do not attain to the privileges of the higher spiritual life. They read, they pray, they communicate; but they do not come any the nearer for it all. They are kept at as great a distance as ever. And then they lose heart and courage, and doubts creep over them, and temptation has greater power, and the world stronger attractions, and they know not the cause, and they marvel at their failure.

And yet all the while the cause is not far to seek: they are excluding themselves from the atmosphere of love, and it is only through the medium of that atmosphere that they can have true spiritual perception.

Put away, I beseech you, put away at once and

for ever all indulged spite, and malice, and uncharitableness. Put away all that hinders godly union and concord, that your spirit may enjoy unclouded vision and have an undisturbed possession of the eternal purities of religion, and in this spirit draw near to the Holy Feast which the love of GOD has provided for you. Come and take the sign, the symbols and the pledge of that boundless Love which has had compassion on unthankful man. As you contemplate that love learn what your love ought to be; learn the self-sacrifice of love, its gentleness and tender compassion, its boundless generosity, and un-earthly goodness.

There is nowhere you can study it so well as before the Cross of your Lord. There is no equal constraining power, as the magnet of His sacrifice once and for ever offered. Come then, come often with assured heart, and take home in the fullness of confidence this great love of Him, which has been manifested in the sending His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.

## *INDIVIDUAL NOTICE.*

JOHN x. 8.

*"He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out."*

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THIS gracious declaration of our Lord, the Good Shepherd, is similar to that which had been made of Him in the Old Testament. It tells us of His individual knowledge and notice of each separate believer, His particular acquaintance with our several cases, just as by the Prophet Ezekiel God had said, "I will make you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." To pass under the rod, referring to the custom of the Eastern shepherd, who wanting to see each separate sheep, brings them all into some narrow passage, and then, placing his rod across it, causes the whole flock to pass under it one by one, so that each is brought separately and individually under the shepherd's notice. The

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peculiarities of each are thus discovered, and the number of the whole secured.

This process, then, we may consider finished, when the Shepherd calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out.

There are two truths, which taken together represent well our relation to God. The one is our corporate life as members of the Church Society, with our joint life and our joint privileges, and the other is our individual relationship, each severally and apart, to our God and Father.

Let us then remember, and remember for our comfort, that we are each personally known to our gracious Saviour. He knows us each. He calls us each by name, each with his own separate peculiarities, his trials, which no one else encounters; his temptations and his privileges, his weaknesses, his graces, his antecedents, and his future, they are all known and seen by the Omniscient Shepherd.

As we present ourselves at the holy Table, as we each take the memorials of our dear Lord's sacrifice, let us remember that he calls us each by name, just as though no one else existed, just as though each was the only sinner in the universe of God, as though no one else was thought of in

the great sacrifice, as though the Blood was shed for each one alone, as though the Intercession in Heaven was on behalf of nobody besides. There each in his naked individuality, each in his unshared responsibility, is beneath the watchful eye of Him who gave His life for His sheep. As as we take home the thought, how do all our sins crowd upon our recollections, with their ingratitude, their coldness, and their baseness; and how sensible do we become of our weakness, our utter weakness for any good whatever, without the constant presence of the ever-loving Shepherd.

You know that it was so with the risen Saviour. He does not treat the individual as too small for His notice. Mary Magdalene in the garden, Simon Peter with a special revelation, the two on the road to Emmaus, Thomas and his peculiar doubts, Peter and his special denial, the loved Apostle and his prospect of lengthened days, they are each sought out and individually noticed. There is the same individual care in the ascended life.

Once more then does His voice come to you. It speaks home to your hearts, it tells you of His affectionate love, it assures you of His unchanging faithfulness, and it bids you in your isolation,

which it may be is oppressing you, know for certain that He enters into all your private joys and sorrows, that He can measure the capacity of your heart, that He knows the way you take, and that now He looks on you, and bids you come once again to Him. Fear no unkind criticism, no unfriendly judgment, He loves you too well for that ; but with a full knowledge of all your weakness He offers to lead you into His green pastures, and there to feed you on Himself.

## **THE SACRIFICE OF WORSHIP.**

**HEBREWS XIII. 15.**

*"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."*

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THERE are two distinct theories as to the true meaning of public worship. The one would represent it as the coming together of poor sinners in order that they may receive something from God, and the other their meeting in the hope of making Him an offering for His acceptance. It is very important for us in our frequent services in God's House of Prayer to place clearly before us the simple aim and object of our gathering together. Is it as some would have it, that you may get something; or as others would tell you, that you may give something?

Neither theory contains the whole truth. In fact each is true, there is no antagonism between

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them, they are supplementary the one to the other.

We do come here as poor, needing and seeking much. We ask for pardon for our confessed sins, we ask for sustenance in our daily wants, we ask for blessings more numerous than we can even mention for ourselves and others. We come here seeking instruction, to hear the Word of God, and an authoritative exposition of that Word. We come here seeking that communion we all so much require—communion with our brethren who are engaged in the same struggle with ourselves. These are undeniably amongst our objects. We come with the view of receiving, receiving from God through the ordinances which He has appointed.

But then we come here for something more, as is implied in the very name of worship. Our service is not only the service of prayer and the service of instruction, or the service of mutual encouragement. It is one of adoration ; it is one of sacrifice. I use the word sacrifice in the modified sense in which it is used in the text. “The sacrifice of praise is the fruit of the lips.”

I will not now to enquire the value of that which we have to give, or dwell on the un-

doubted truth that we are unable by any gift of ours to make the Lord of Heaven and Earth one jot the richer. The question is not what good our pains or our offerings can do for Him. It is enough that He expresses His good pleasure in them, that He condescends to tell us that they are acceptable in His sight. We come here to give ourselves to God ; to give our praises, the praises of a lifetime, to Him. And therefore it is that we are to take the double view, embracing the two theories, that poor as we are we come to receive; and that we come also in our poverty to offer.

This two-fold view applies not only to public worship generally, but also particularly to the Holy Communion. It is eminently one in which we receive, and eminently also one in which we offer.

It is established for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls; it is the chief of the means of grace ; it is the great act of Christian community and fellowship. By it the death and sufferings of the Crucified One are brought before us, and we are made partakers of His Body and Blood.

On the other hand, it is also the great military

oath, in which we over and over again swear our allegiance to our great Leader. Here we repeatedly take the Christian vows upon us, and offer ourselves and all that we possess to the service of the only-begotten Son of God. As such, the service has received the name of the Eucharist, or the giving thanks. Hence it is that the giving of alms and oblations for the service of God is so appropriate in this service ; hence that we have the highest acts of adoration in the two ancient Christian hymns ; and hence, too, the lowliest prostration of humbled sinners before the throne of God. Let us endeavour as far as in us lies to make our approach in this spirit. What is the sacrifice in which the Lord delighteth most ? We have been told that it is the humble and contrite heart. And how is this humbleness to be gained ? It is the sense of sin and the consciousness of weakness, gained by the view of the great Sacrifice of Christ. Come now and feed on the Holy Victim, once and for ever offered ; and through Him offer your souls and bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

## **THE FIRST MARTYR.**

### **S. STEPHEN'S DAY.**

**Acts vii. 60.**

*"And when He had said this, he fell asleep."*

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LIFE yesterday, with all its unfoldings and energies and hopes was brought before us in the birth of the Holy Child,—death to-day, in the stoning of S. Stephen, the first of the martyr tribe.

Let us take a few thoughts, just a few brief thoughts in connection with that closing scene.

First then notice how amidst all the opposition of the Jews the accused Stephen never lost faith in God. He did not say : All these things are against me. If Christ had designed to own my work He would not thus have cut it short. He did not say : If this is the manner in which Christ's cause prospers below, how can I believe that He Himself lives and reigns above ? Nothing

of the sort, none of these things do we hear. Never was his faith more strong, or his vision so unclouded as in that last riotous, clamorous, scene, in which his life itself was to be sacrificed. While his enemies are rushing upon him with one accord his eyes are fixed steadfastly on Heaven. He is rapt above earth and earthly things to behold in clear, bright vision his beloved Master standing in manifested glory at the right hand of God. He sees Him, not seated in royal dignity, but standing as in act to succour. And so the martyr bears one last, one crowning witness, to His risen life, to His resistless power, to His omnipresent grace. He said: "Behold I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." And then with what hopefulness of mind and with what quietness of spirit does he address himself to this sudden, cruel, shameful suffering. In the midst of the uproar of angry voices and the flight of blinding, stupifying, crushing stones, he has a majesty of meekness and a power of prayer rarely given to others in seasons of tranquillity and repose. He is calling upon his Master, and saying, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit."

And then as the end approaches, as the buffeted

tortured, mangled frame begins to totter to its dissolution, the dying martyr kneels down upon the blood-stained earth, and collects every energy of soul and body for one last, one crowning act of worship. The posture with which we allow any little excuse to interfere, that reverent bending of the knee in God's worship which many of us never practice, even in God's House, which few of us would practice in a season of pain and sickness, he deemed to be the fittest attitude, even for a dying man: and then with a loud voice, the last utterance on earth of that testimony to which life had been devoted, he cries aloud in the hearing of his enemies themselves, as they stand with uplifted hands around, still thirsting for his blood, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

And when he had said this, "he fell asleep." What a word to apply to a death so violent and so suffering. He fell asleep; he was laid to rest; he was lulled to slumber. The word is enough almost to take away the sting from death. If that is all that death is to the Christian, surely we may fear it too much. But the use of the *word* is not enough to deprive the king of terrors of his power to harm. We have all caught this tone about death. We speak indiscriminately about men

going to their rest. Our word cemetery is borrowed from the same great term which is here employed to express the death of Stephen, and means literally a sleeping place, a place of slumber and repose. Would that we might hope that all that are laid in the burial ground are indeed sleeping in Jesus.

The case of S. Stephen may assure us that no circumstances of death can prevent its being this rest, this sleep, this peacefulness to a Christian. No anguish of pain, no confusion of surrounding sights and sounds, no mocking taunts, no assailing hands. It matters not what the cause of death. These things do not either make or mar the true sleeping place of the Christian.—When S. Stephen at last breathed out his soul from a bruised and disfigured and mangled body, amidst shouts of execration and hands raised in murder, it is written of him in the words now before us, he fell asleep.

In that rest from labour, and rest with Christ, and rest unto rising again, may we share with him in the time which our God shall appoint for us.

## **THE PERSECUTOR CONVICTED.**

### **THE CONVERSION OF S. PAUL.**

**Acts ix. 5.**

*"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."*

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LET us take as the one thought for our brief consideration, that nothing so convinces us of sin as the thought that every sin is an offence against our dear Lord and Master.

This is the great truth contained in the history brought before us to-day. What convinced Saul of Tarsus of his sin was the discovery that he was going directly counter to the blessed, loving Son of God. "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Arguments had not convinced him, the eloquence of S. Stephen and the moving spectacle of his martyrdom had made no impression on him—the constancy of the disciples, their appeals to Holy Scripture, had left him as he was before. But one word direct from Him

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who had died to save him brought him to his senses.

Thus has it ever been, as our Lord told us that it should be. The Holy Spirit shall convince the world of sin, because they believe not on Me. The exhibition of Christ is the great instrument for the conviction of sin.

We see this partly on the day of the Crucifixion. The people were unmoved during those hours of prolonged suffering. Their hearts were unmoved by pity so long as life was in the Holy Sufferer. But when He died—the very moment He commended His spirit to the Father, conviction of sin began to break through the enmity of His crucifiers—immediately “the centurion glorified God, saying Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts and returned.”

The same held good when St. Peter began to preach. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now, when they heard this, they were pricked to the heart.” The same truth was proclaimed in his second sermon, and the same again in his

third. And with what results? After the first sermon three thousand souls gladly received the word. After the second the number was swelled to five thousand. After the third the counting ceased, and the number became a multitude, "the *multitude* of them that believed."

And so it is now. The piercing point of the arrow of conviction consists in this same fact, that our sins are against the loving heart of our dear Lord and Saviour.

Let us endeavour to bring this truth practically to bear upon ourselves. All our sins are sins against the Lord of life. Yea more, each of our sins is a rejection for the time of the sovereignty of our Saviour. We wonder often whether, had we been alive in those early days, we should have been amongst those who received or those who rejected Christ. It is a natural question; but it is more profitable to enquire, How is it now? Do my sins convict me of unbelief? And does unbelief convince me of sin?

It is for us now, as it was to Saul of Tarsus of old. Each time we are guilty of going against the Son of God, each time we are harsh upon one of His followers, each time we place a stumbling block in the path of one of His feeble ones, the voice

says to us, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Lukewarmness in the cause of Christ, indifference to the sorrows and sufferings of others, coldness in devotion, intermission of private prayer, these and those grosser forms of sin which men acknowledge to be sin, these, all of them, are seen to be sin indeed, when viewed in the light of the Cross of Christ.

And to you, burdened it may be with an undefined sense that your spiritual life is not what it should be, to you does this loving tender remonstrance sound. It tells you that your Saviour is still most gracious, that He has not yet been turned aside by your indifference to Him. Turn, He says, pause, break off from your present course. Do you know what you are about? Do you see in its full significance the bearing of your present life? "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

## *TOUCHES OF CHARACTER.*

### **S. MARK.**

**S. MARK XIV. 51, 52.**

*"And there followed Him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body, and the young men laid hold on him, and he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked."*

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It has often been supposed that the young man spoken of here is none other than S. Mark himself. The detail of facts is remarkably minute, the name only is wanting. S. John, we know, introduces himself in the same inobtrusive way, and perhaps S. Luke also, if he is to be recognised in one of the two disciples who went on the first Lord's day to Emmaus.

There is a fitness too in the introduction of the story, if this conjecture be the true one. The Evangelist has just recorded that all the disciples forsook their apprehended Master and fled. And more natural than that he should add his own

confession, now that awakened suddenly in the dead of night, terror had overcome him, and he had fled like the older disciples, and left the Saviour alone in the hands of His captors.

If this view then be correct, we have S. Mark recording of himself only his failing through want of courage ; the same weak point which afterwards came more prominently into view when he deserted S. Barnabas and S. Paul, on the eve of their dangerous mission into Asia Minor. And we learn that he who was one of the most forward in action and the warmest in his attachment to the chief of the Apostles, did nevertheless on one, if not two occasions, come short through fear of man. And therefore it is, to say the least, remarkable and most instructive to notice that the side of our Lord's character brought most prominently into view by this Evangelist, is the strength and the power of the Lion of the tribe of Judah. With what circumstantial touches does he put before us Him on whose lips the multitude so hung that they had scarce room to stand or time to eat ; Who wrought such wondrous works that all men did marvel ; Whose fame was spread all the more He sought to conceal it ; whithersoever He

entered, into villages or cities, the sick were brought out, and brought out only to be made whole.

Most instructive is this fact, because it indicates what is the wisest method for us to take, in order that we may overcome, not merely the fear of man, but indeed any of our difficulties. It is special meditation upon those portions of our Lord's history which illustrate in Him the excellence we wish to obtain ; for there is that wonderful fulness in the history of the Holy One, that amidst all the countless variety of human need, there is for every seeker a full supply.

To-day however it is enough to notice how timid disciples may gain strength, by dwelling on the power of the Son of God. The power manifested, as S. Mark narrates, during his earthly ministry, and the power which he wields now, having sat down, as this Evangelist alone records, on the right hand of God.

For S. Mark did gain the strength he needed. Notwithstanding his desertion of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, we find S. Paul mentioning him with the greatest affection and most cordial praise in several of his Epistles, and it was he the once timid disciple who has been selected by the Holy Ghost to give in this Gospel the strength

of Christ for the education of timid Christians to the end of time.

Let us draw more upon this inexhaustible Strength, let us turn it to profitable account in our daily lives remembering that "To them who have no might He increaseth strength."

## *THE SLOW LEARNER.*

### **SS. PHILIP AND JAMES.**

**S. JOHN XIV. 9.**

*"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip?"*

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It is not much that we know of the first of the two Saints whose memory is before us this morning. The fellow-townsman of S. Andrew and S. Peter, and probably of S. Nathaniel also, sought out in the first instance by the Saviour Himself, and the first of all to receive the authoritative call of discipleship in the words, Follow Me:—he it was who brought S. Nathaniel to know the Messiah, and afterwards, as this Evangelist tells us, those Greeks who had come to worship at the feast. Of his labours as an Apostle we learn nothing for certain, though tradition has assigned him the north of Asia Minor as the scene of his ministry.

Why he has been joined with S. James, the  
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brother of our Lord, to be brought conjointly before the minds of Christians I cannot tell, unless it be that in either case they enjoyed *peculiar advantages, the result of which was not for some time evident.* We know that it was said at a very late period of our Lord's ministry that His brethren did not believe in Him, those brethren who had seen so much of His private life and been privileged to have such intimate communion with Him. In this point then, S. Philip and S. James were alike in the length of time which their education in the faith required, as well as in their great eminence as the founders of the Christian Church. So that we have joined together the first officially called disciple and the brother of our Lord, S. James the less, afterwards Bishop of Jerusalem.

In the passage before us, taken from the gospel of the day, we are shewn how S. Philip, even at the close of our Lord's ministry, was in comparative ignorance of His true character. For it was when he was told who was the Way to the Father that he asked "Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." It was as though he had said that his Master was not God, that he wanted a further revelation. And therefore to him, and

all other enquirers like him, does the Saviour tenderly reply, “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.”

There is a rebuke here to those who would separate Christ from God. This S. Philip was doing, passing by Christ and seeking God in heaven. As Luther remarks, “He lets Christ sit there and speak, but cannot cleave simply to the Christ who is speaking to him. Disregarding Him, he wanders away in his own imagination to the clouds. Ah, that he could but see the Father as He sits there among His Angels !”

You may depend upon it that here is one cause of many of our difficulties—the want of this clear view of the Divinity of Christ. We must bring our minds back to the elementary truth that because no man hath seen God or can see Him, therefore the Only-begotten Son of God became man for us.

It does not follow that because we have been from our infancy reared under Christian teaching, or surrounded with Christian associations, that therefore we are sure to be right in our views of Christ. As with these two saints, so it may be with us too. The Lord of Life may have been a

very long time with us, and we may have heard His teaching, and attended His courts, and partaken of the Holy Supper, and yet not have laid hold of the truth that He is in the Father and the Father in Him.

Here is the lesson, a lesson we may be slow to learn, but if learnt it is the foundation of all success in the divine life. S. Philip learnt it, S. James did also. They were amongst the leaders of the early Church, those whom we are to hold in special honour, as having bequeathed to us the glorious inheritance of the Gospel.

Let us too cling to their faith, and though we are not called to so eminent a position, it may be ours to glorify God and to help to extend His kingdom.

## *THE SYMPATHISING APOSTLE.*

### **S. BARNABAS.**

**ACTS IV. 86, 87.**

*"And Joses, who by the Apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is being interpreted, the son of Consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the Apostles' feet."*

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S. BARNABAS was not of the number of the twelve, though afterwards he, with his companion S. Paul, were included in the number of the Apostles. We know him chiefly in connection with S. Paul, introducing him first to the Apostles at Jerusalem, and afterwards associating himself with him in the ministry to the Antioch Christians, and then by the direction of the Holy Ghost accompanying him on his first missionary journey.

But the point to which we may well confine our brief attention this morning is the name, the name given by the Apostles themselves, who knew the character of their associate—Barnabas, the

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son of Consolation. Here, when first introduced to our notice, we have his great act of self-sacrifice in giving up his whole possession for the advance of the Church of Christ. This fact and this name taken in connection suggest to us food for useful thought. For we take this Saint of God, well versed in all the mysteries of sympathy and consolation, successful in binding up the bleeding wounds of those in trouble, able to feel with a full gushing heart for any one in distress, temporal or spiritual ; taking the former persecutor by the hand when the Apostles would have cast him out, pleading the cause of Mark when S. Paul so strongly condemned him. And we seek the secret of his success. It was not his learning, for in that he was surpassed ; it was not his zeal, for in that he was equalled ; it was not in natural gifts, for others had them in even a greater degree. But it was his deep love, that love which enabled him to recognize Christ in His various members. The power of consolation is a power in advance of benevolence. A man may have the the kindest and most generous disposition, his soul may be filled with the love of God, he may from the highest motives be daily denying himself for the good of others, and yet he may be utterly

unable to administer comfort. When he stands by the bed of suffering, or when he sits by one troubled in conscience, or tried with doubt, or overwhelmed with perplexity, he may utter truths without power, and give advice that does not come near the question, or administer temporal relief without assisting the burdened spirit. And why is this? Because he cannot place himself in the sufferer's stead. He wants the power of realising the trial as it presents itself to the tried one, and so he fails to be a comforter.

He who has the greatest power of true sympathy, has the great power to console. Some have this naturally. Most gain it only through long, painful, and bitter experiences. It was the partner of this master of consolation who left for us the true explanation of the problem. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." There can scarcely be a higher title than this of Barnabas. None which a Christian should more aim at, because none is more in accordance with the spirit of God. God

the Father is the God of all comfort, God the Holy Ghost is called the other Comforter by our Lord, shewing that He Himself is the Comforter too.

He that would be most like God must learn to be a Barnabas, a son of Consolation, to seek out opportunities for taking the side of the weakest and the oppressed, for restoring the wanderer, for relieving sorrow, and spreading abroad on every side the genial sunshine of his Master.

Go forth then like Him whom we remember to-day, and endeavour to fulfil your mission of comfort, feeling with those who are afflicted, and assuring them of the true sympathy of their Risen Head.

## *ALL SAINTS.*

HEB. XII. 1.

*"Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses."*

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ON other festivals we have commemorated the holy lives of those known to us in the sacred story; sometimes indeed known by name and scarcely anything beside. But we have found that their memory has sufficed to bring home great and glorious thoughts to our hearts. But to-day we remember a countless multitude some units of which have been known personally to each of us. There is not one of us but has known more or less intimately, one or more of that cloud of All Saints upon which the Church this day is thinking throughout the whole world.

And this very thought is most encouraging to us; we have in the associations of this day a communion with all the members of every branch of the Church of Christ. Each is think-

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ing of their friends who have fallen asleep in Jesus, treasuring up happy and blessed memories of their Christian excellence ; listening to the evidence given by some portion of the cloud of witnesses, and looking forward to the time when the whole number shall be complete.

But whilst we thus have our personal association on this blessed day, there is, over and beyond, that large innumerable multitude, of all climes and ages, which go to make up the complete number of the departed just. Their number, the multitude of the sources from which they came, go to reprove our littleness and narrow views and sympathies. Every one is there who has held to the faith of Christ.

The faith may have been overlaid with many superstitions or defaced with frequent inconsistencies. But the faith which has worked by love has been the test, and has stamped them with the common mark of attachment to our risen Head.

We know many points on which this great number differ from us ; their course is run, their strife is over, their work on earth complete ; temptation has ceased to ply them, Satan has no access to harm them ; pain is over, and it is the time of repose and rest. In these things they differ

from us ; they differ too in their spiritual existence, whatever the mysterious laws of that existence are.

But in one point at all events we have something in common with them ; and therefore in one point at least we can hold communion with them. We have every reason for believing that they like us, are looking forward with longing expectation to the consummation of all things, the second coming of our Lord ; for they seem to be included in those wonderful words in the eighth Chapter of the Romans,—the earnest expectation of the *creation*, for so should the words be rendered and treated,—the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

So that when we are in our times of depression looking out for the end of all, and fixing our eager hopes on that time when He shall come King of Kings and Lord of Lords, we may know that our hearts are beating in unison with theirs, that what we long for they long for too, the time when all shall be one, when with glorified bodies we may be for ever with the Lord.

And having this bond of common hope with them, it is encouraging to think how their ranks have been and still are continually swelling. From

the time of righteous Abel to that of the last infant who has passed away their number has always been on the increase. One by one, redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, they have been gathered safely home,—a number, passing number, a cloud of witnesses, that cannot be diminished by all the devices of Satan.

We too have our longings to join that number, to belong not merely by profession but by actual right to that white-robed multitude before the throne. Each of that company bears witness to us of the power of faith, each testifies to the loving presence of the Almighty Saviour, each speaks of the substantial verity of the unseen, and each invites us with ready welcome to come and taste the preciousness of the Christian's portion.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

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